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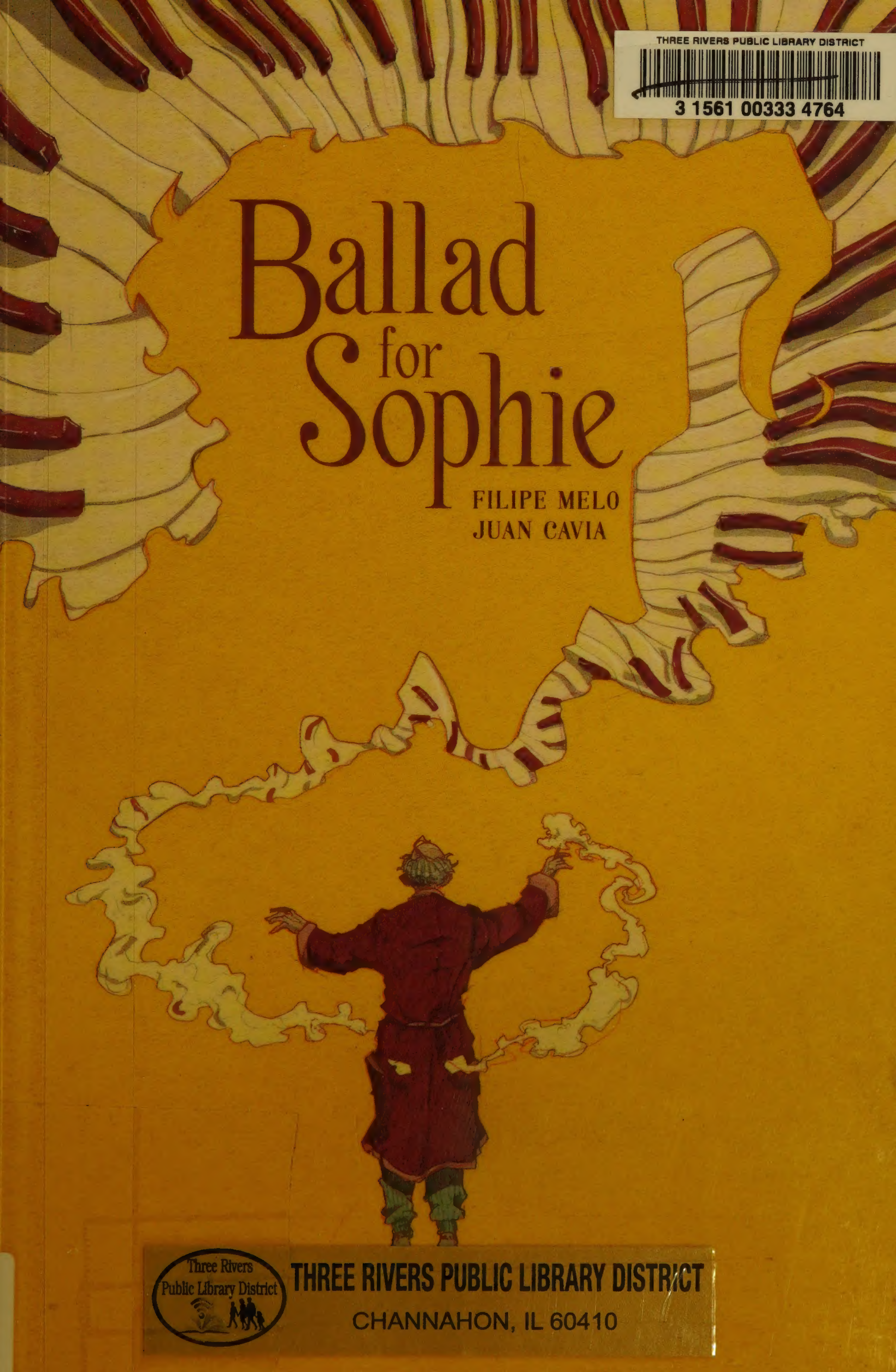
Ballad for Sophie

FILIPE MELO
JUAN CAVIA



Three Rivers Public Library District
THREE RIVERS PUBLIC LIBRARY DISTRICT
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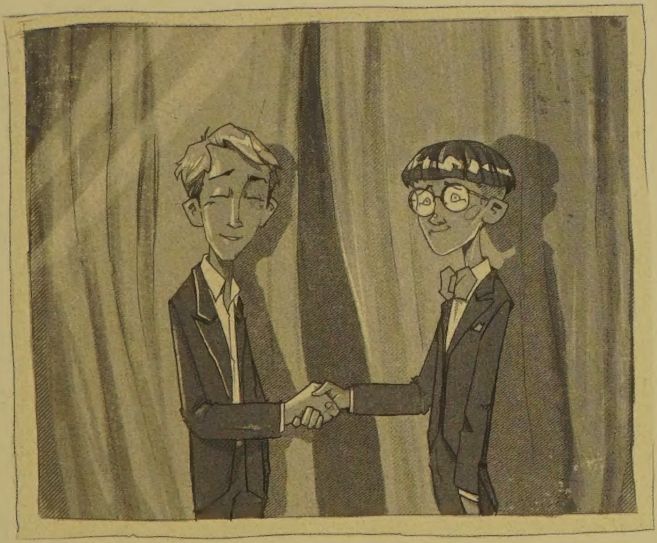
1933. In the small French village of Cressy-la-Valoise, a local piano contest brings together two brilliant young players: Julien Dubois, the privileged heir of a wealthy family, and François Samson, the janitor's son. One wins, one loses, and both are changed forever.

1997. In a huge mansion stained with cigarette smoke and memories, a virtuoso who hasn't played a note in decades is shaken by the unexpected visit of an interviewer. Somewhere between reality and fantasy, Julien begins to relate a complex and moving story about the cost of success.

When all is said and done, did anyone ever truly win? And is there any music left to play?

ר|ג|ח

Ballad
for
Sophie



Ballad for Sophie

WRITTEN BY

Filipe Melo

ILLUSTRATED BY

Juan Cavia

Three Rivers Public Library
25207 W Channon Dr
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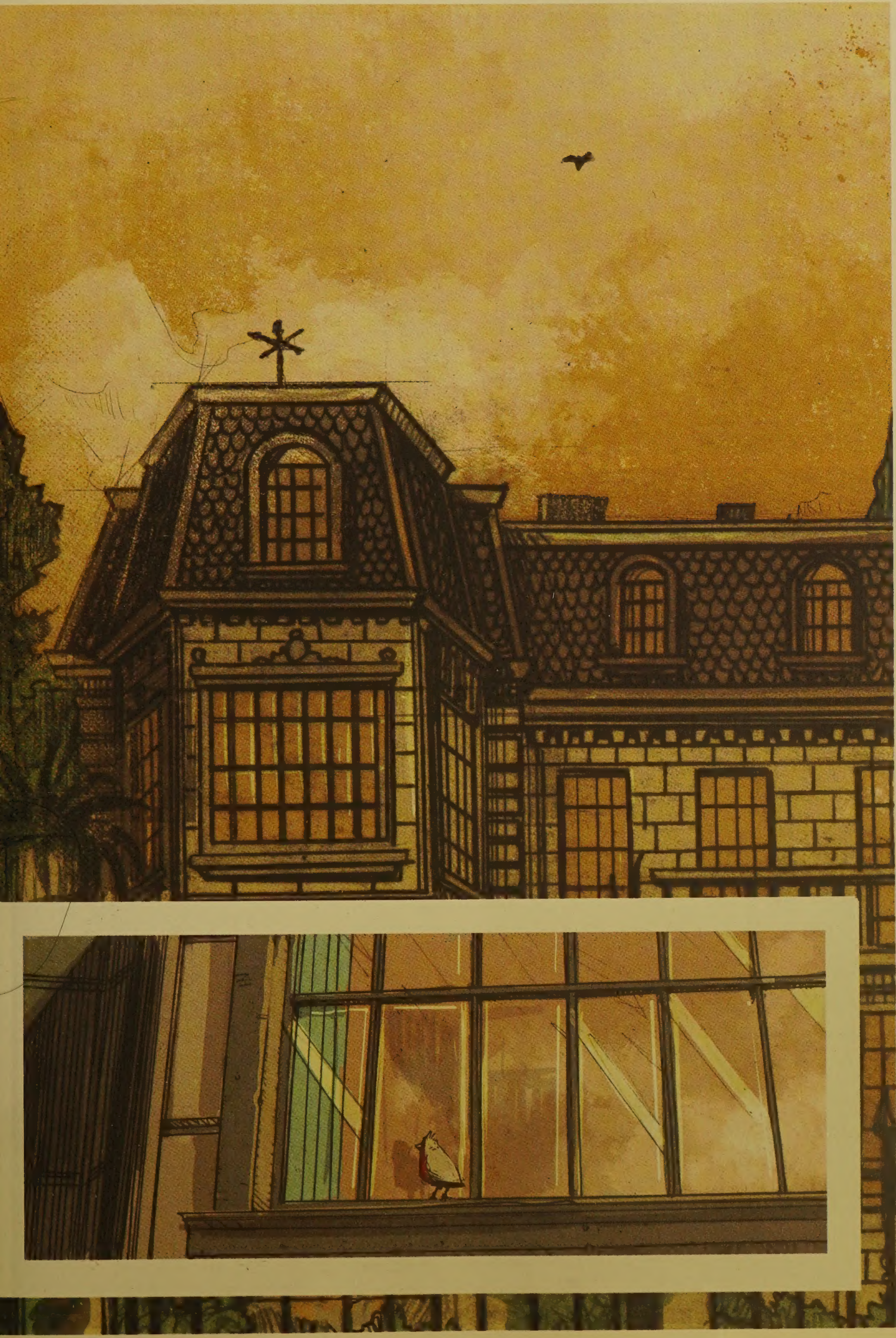
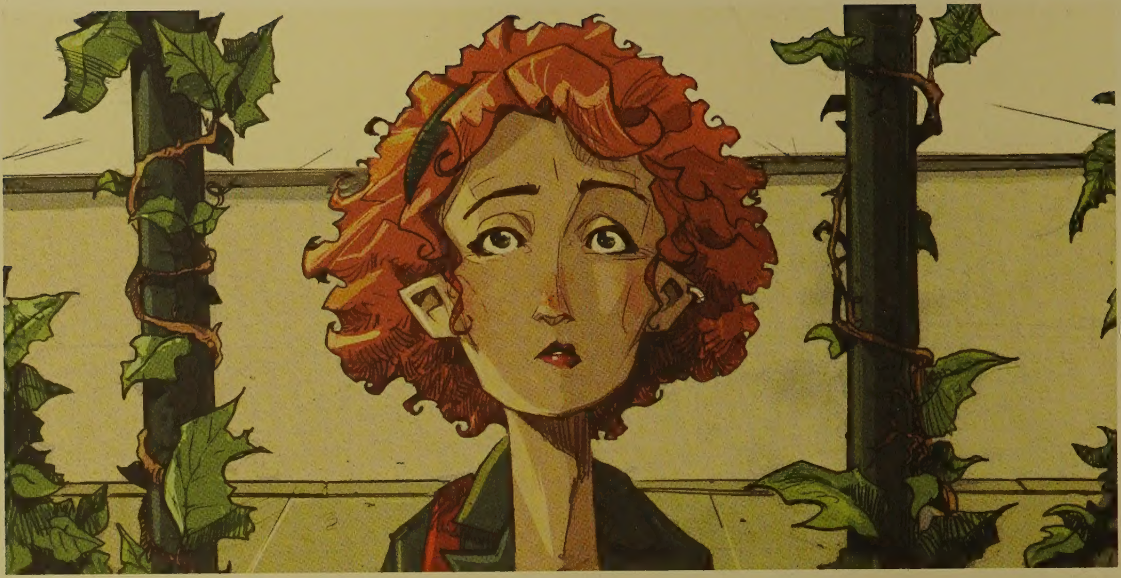
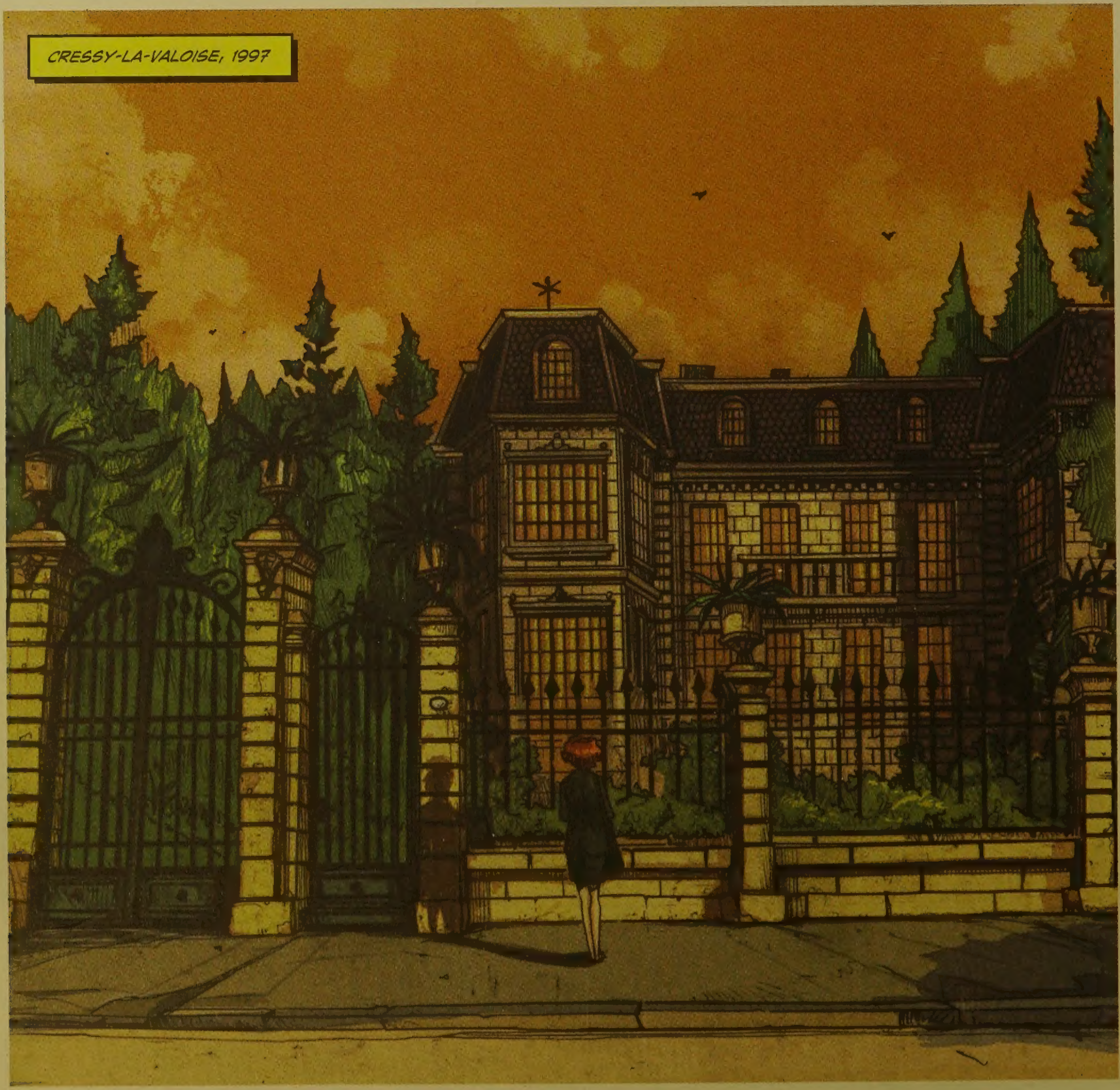
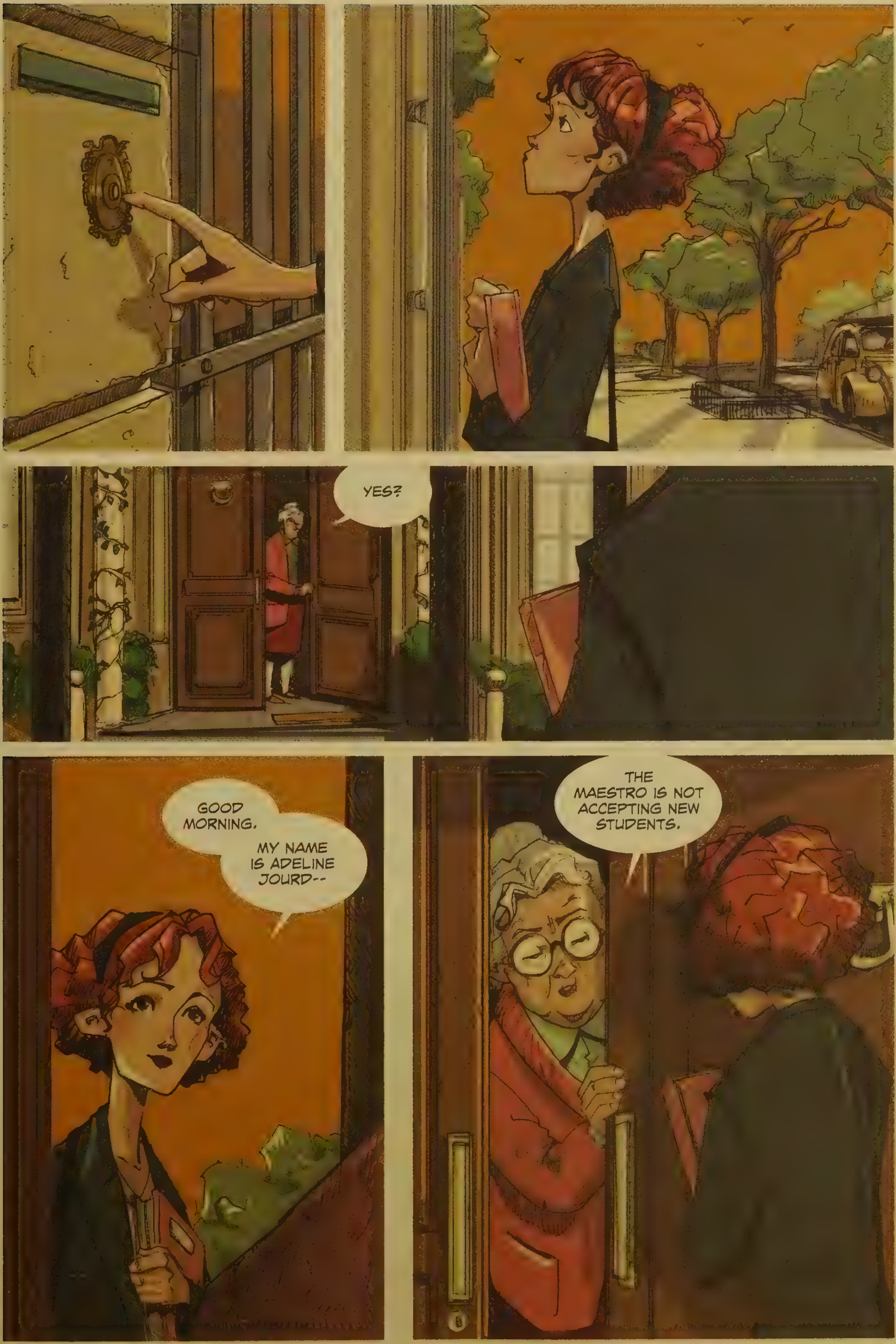
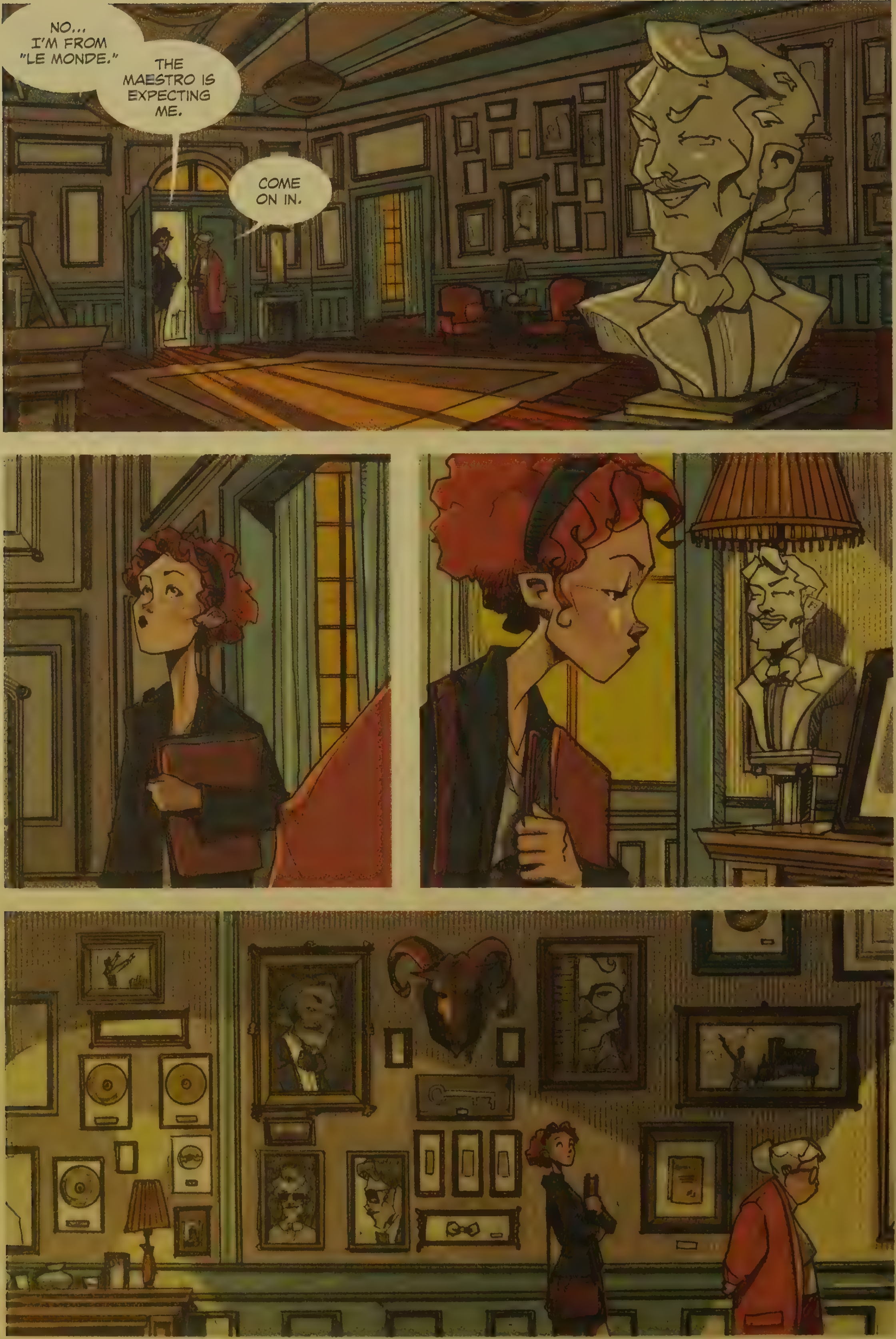
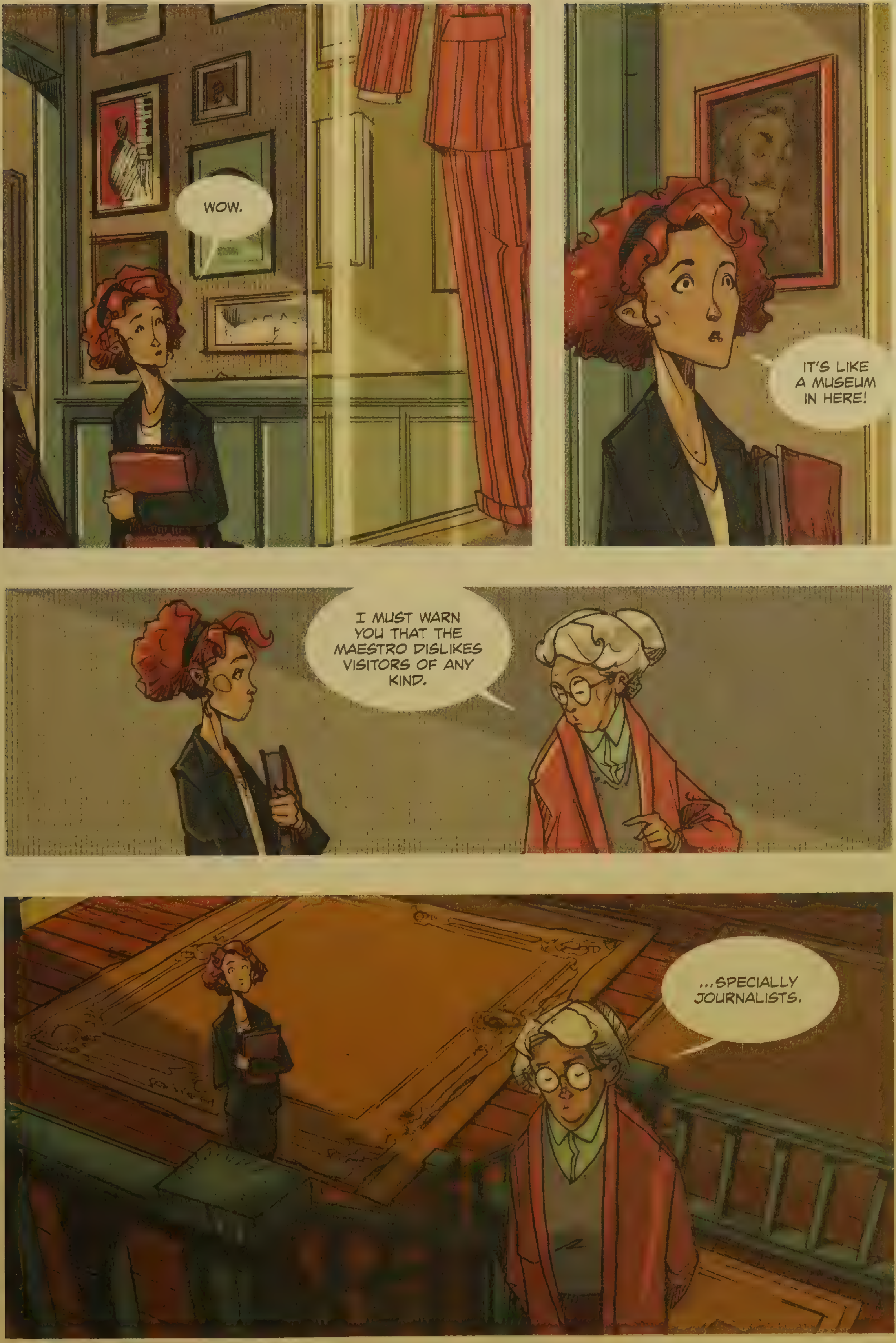


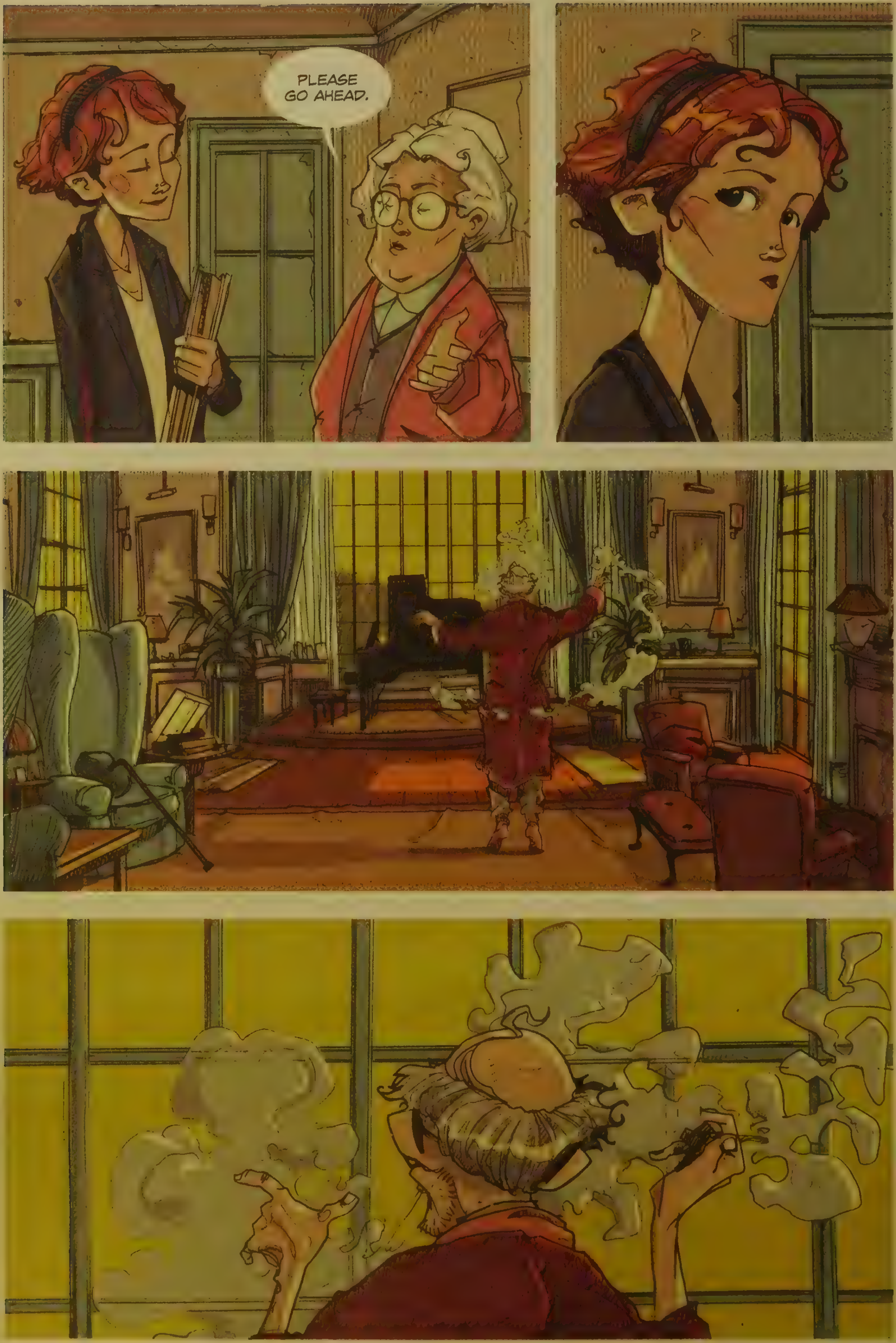


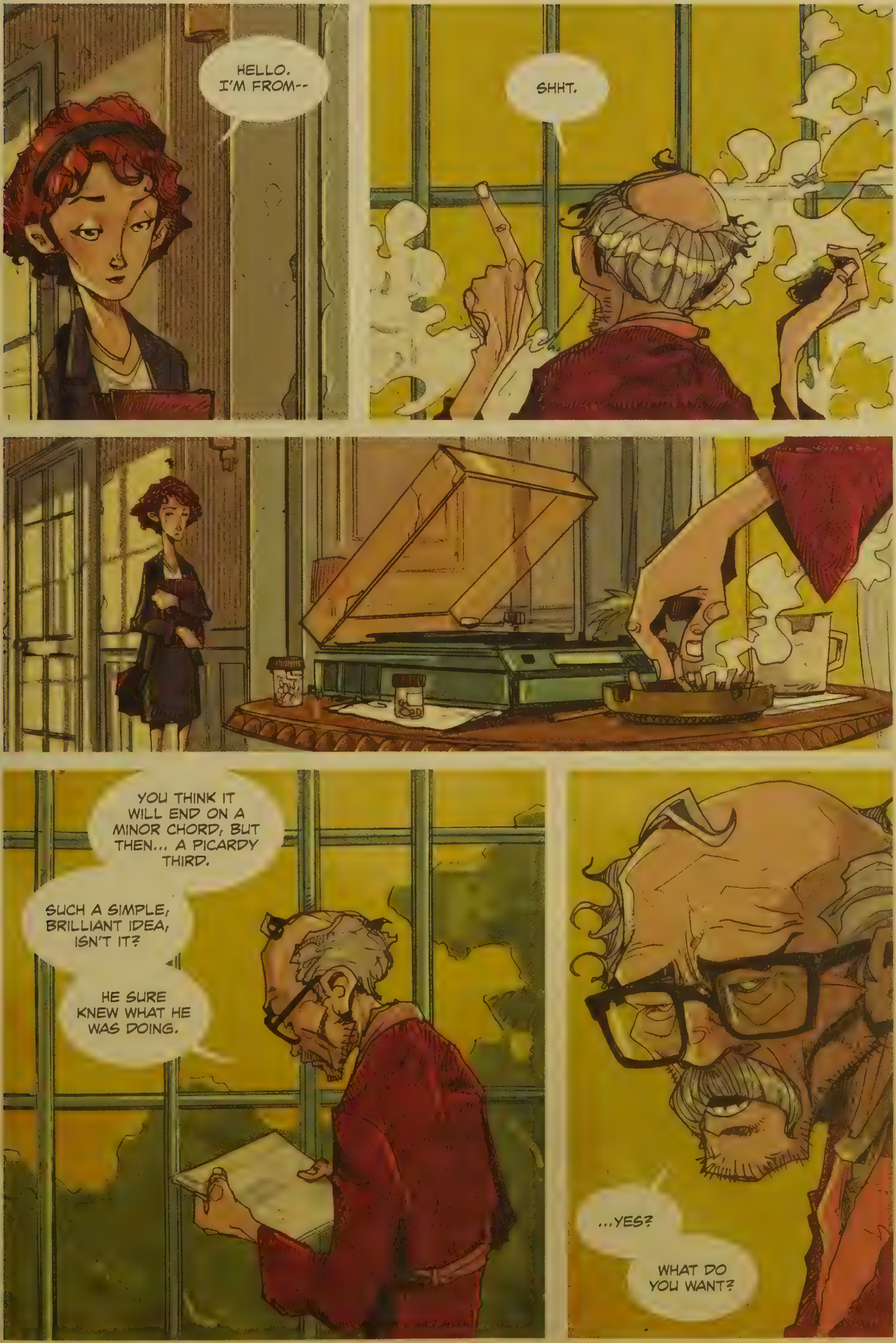

CRESSY-LA-VALOISE, 1997

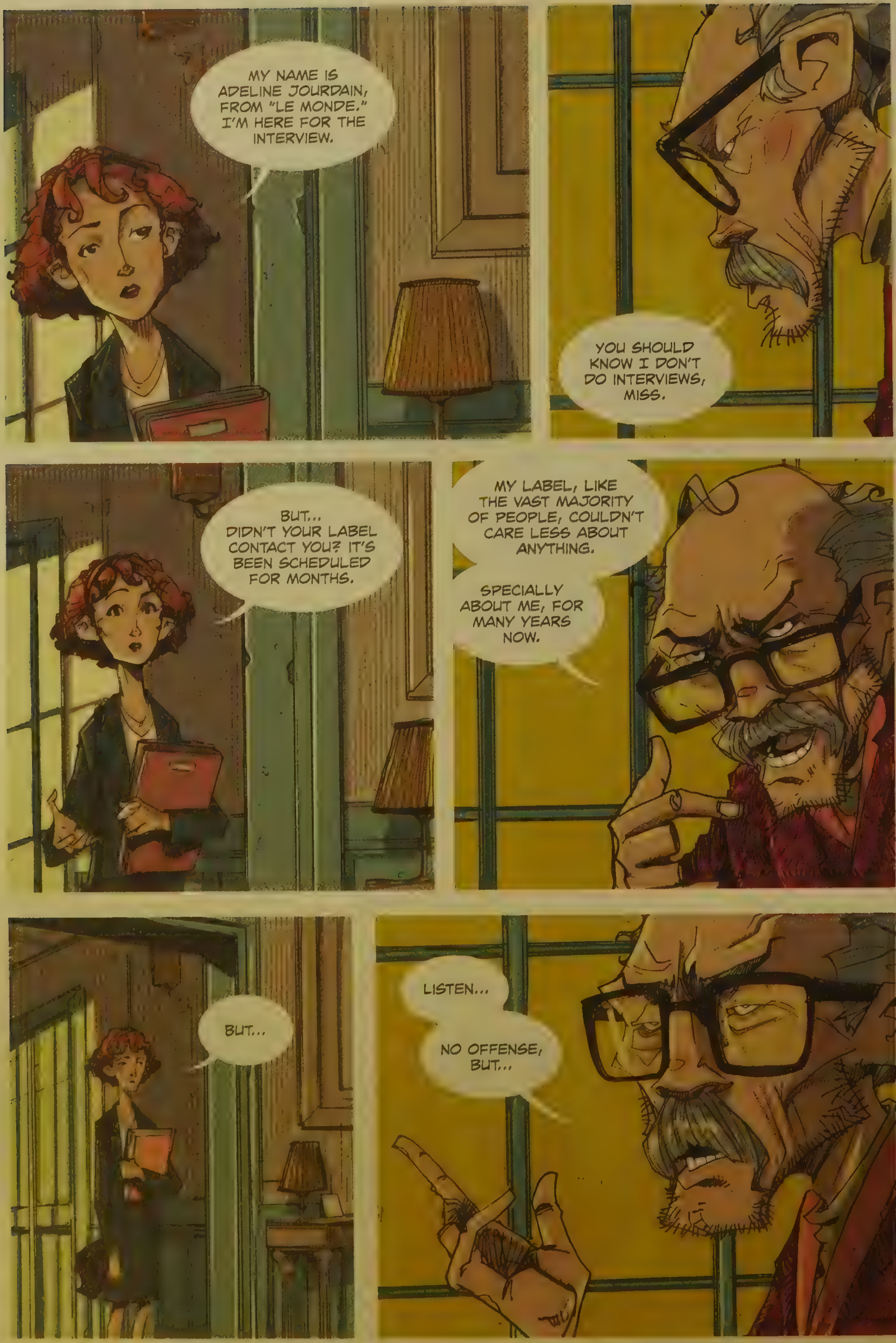

YES?
GOOD MORNING.
MY NAME IS ADELINE JOURD--
THE MAESTRO IS NOT ACCEPTING NEW STUDENTS.

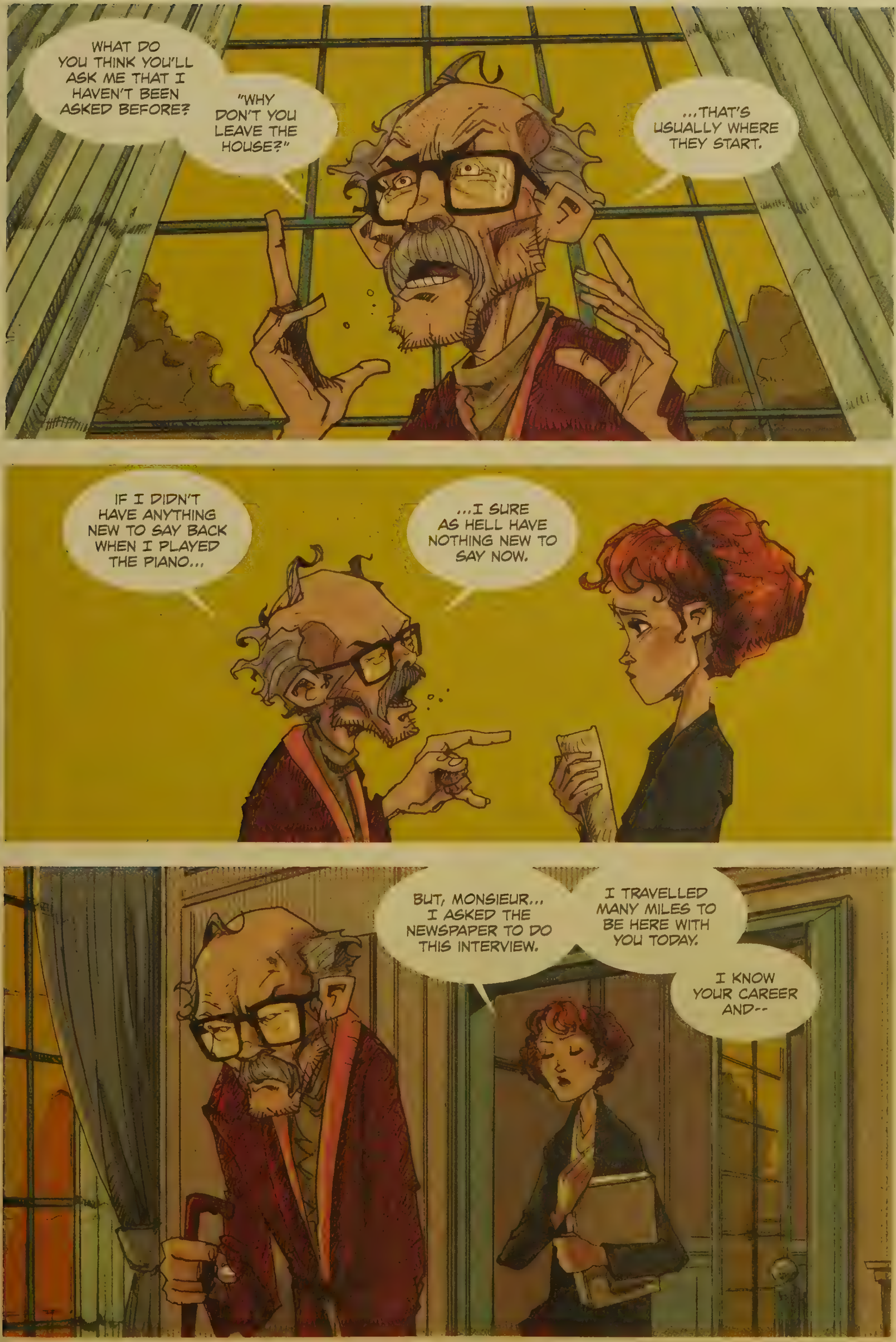

NO... I'M FROM "LE MONDE."
THE MAESTRO IS EXPECTING ME.
COME ON IN.

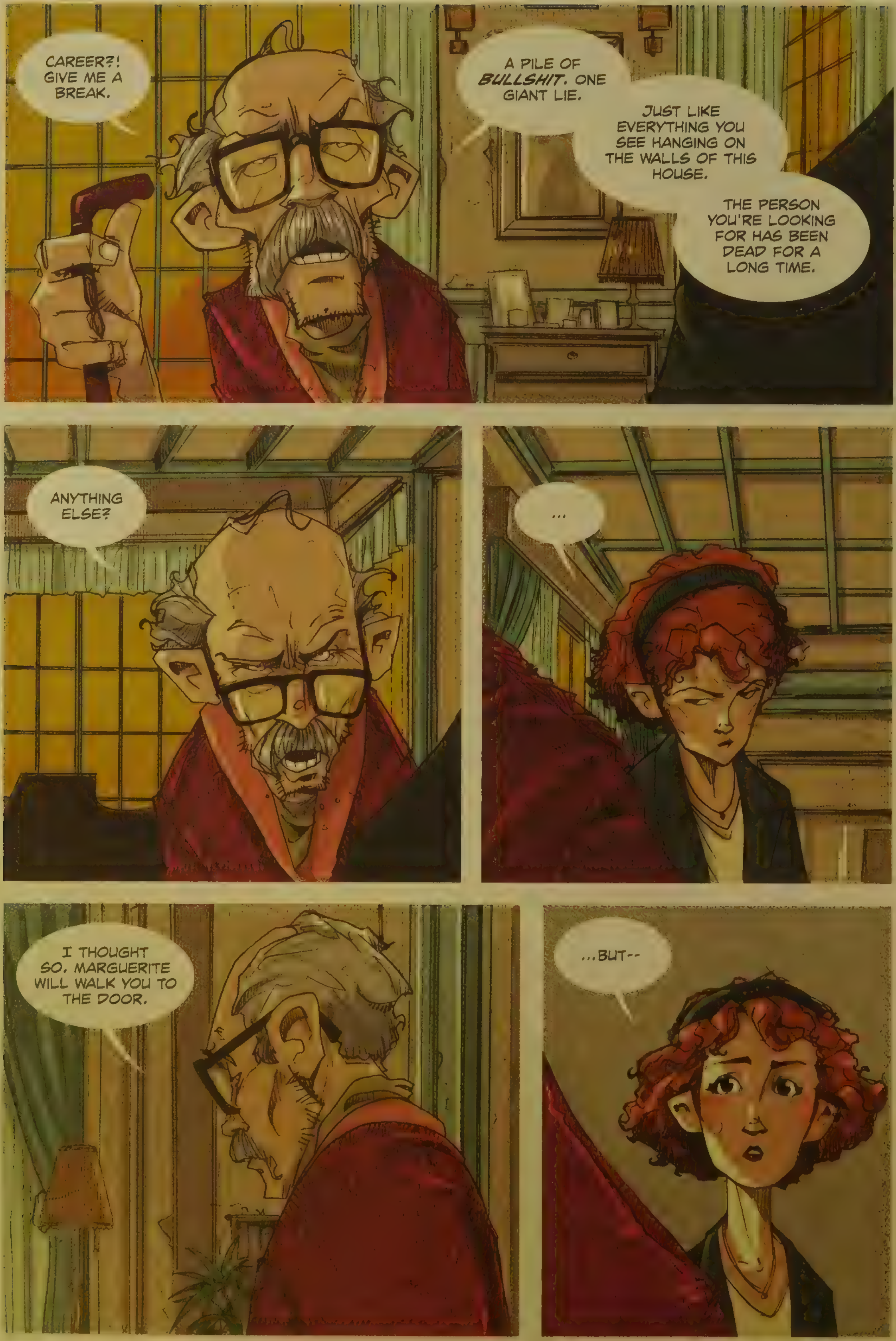

WOW.
IT'S LIKE A MUSEUM IN HERE!
I MUST WARN YOU THAT THE MAESTRO DISLIKES VISITORS OF ANY KIND.
...SPECIALLY JOURNALISTS.

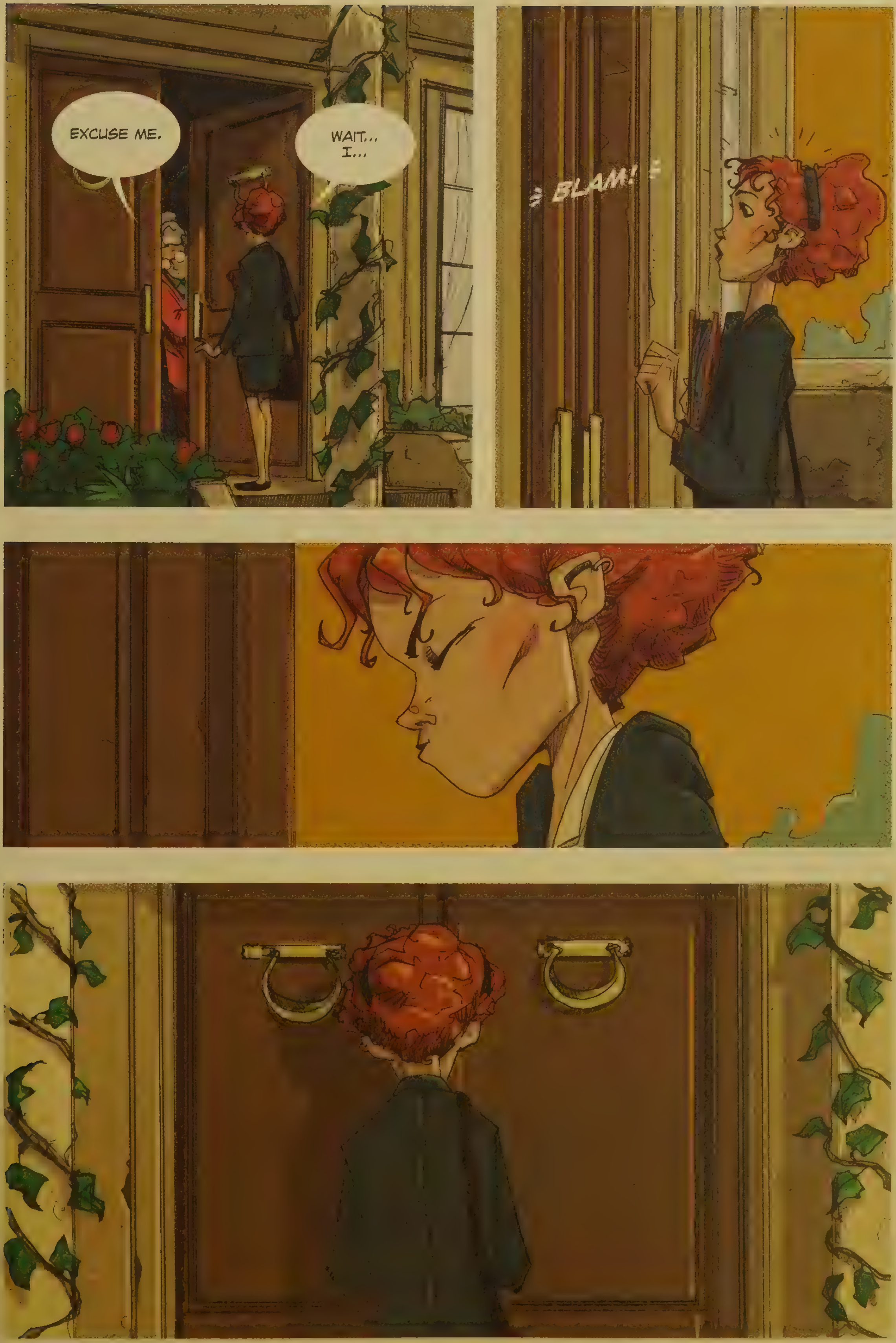

PLEASE GO AHEAD.

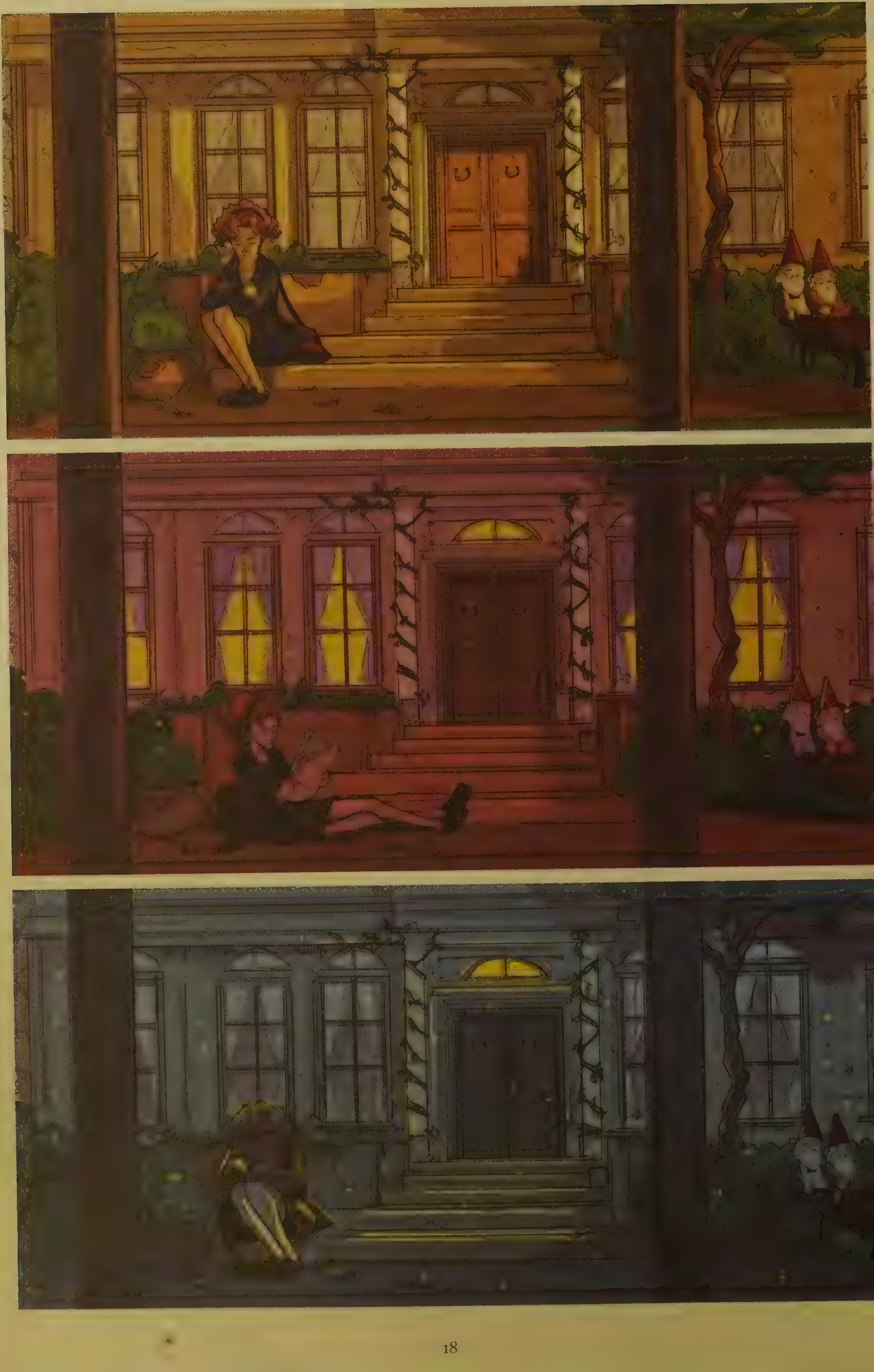

HELLO. I'M FROM--
SHHT.
YOU THINK IT WILL END ON A MINOR CHORD, BUT THEN... A PICARDY THIRD.
SUCH A SIMPLE, BRILLIANT IDEA, ISN'T IT?
HE SURE KNEW WHAT HE WAS DOING.
...YES?
WHAT DO YOU WANT?

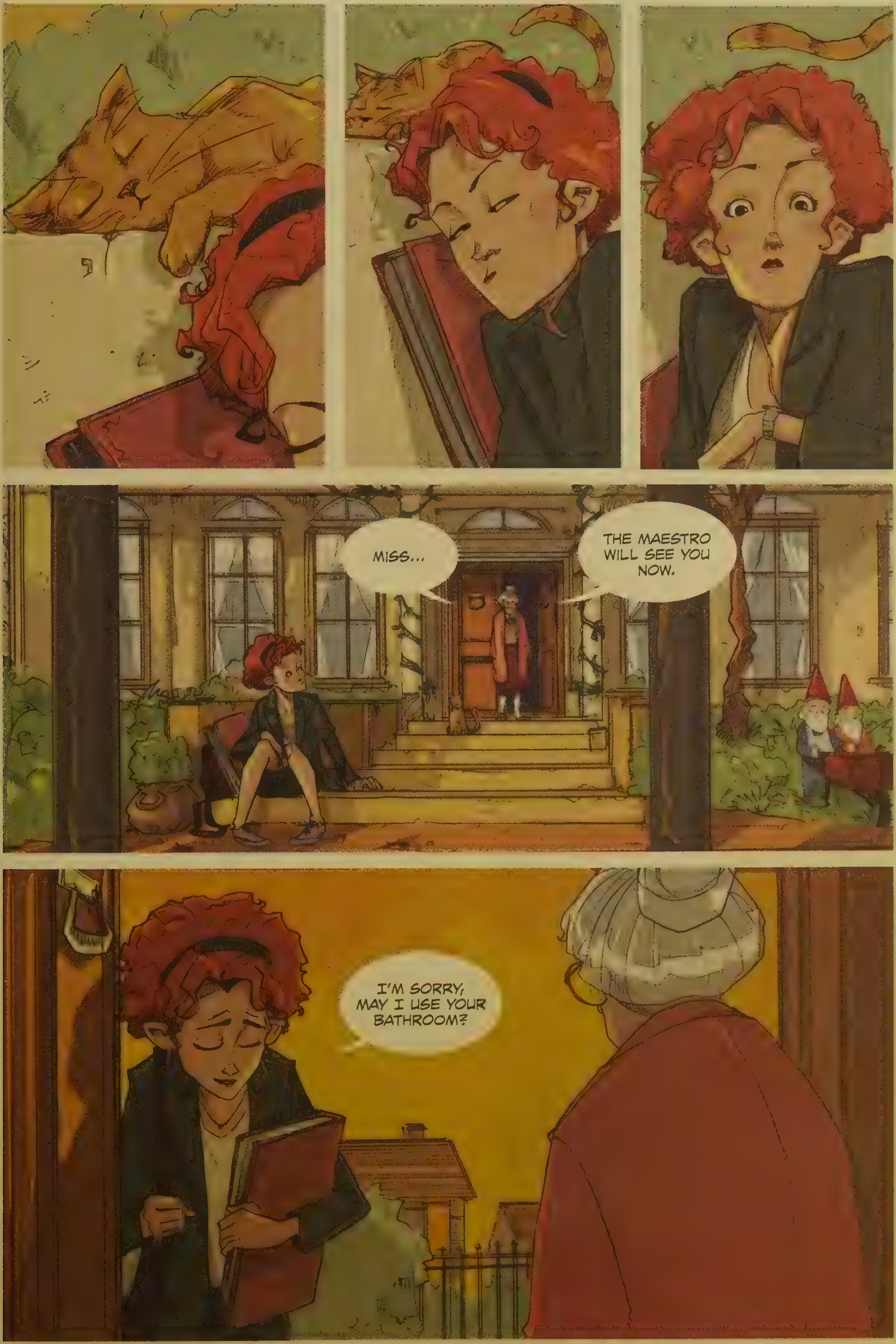

MY NAME IS ADELINE JOURDAIN, FROM "LE MONDE." I'M HERE FOR THE INTERVIEW.
YOU SHOULD KNOW I DON'T DO INTERVIEWS, MISS.
BUT... DIDN'T YOUR LABEL CONTACT YOU? IT'S BEEN SCHEDULED FOR MONTHS.
MY LABEL, LIKE THE VAST MAJORITY OF PEOPLE, COULDN'T CARE LESS ABOUT ANYTHING.
SPECIALLY ABOUT ME, FOR MANY YEARS NOW.
BUT...
LISTEN...
NO OFFENSE, BUT...

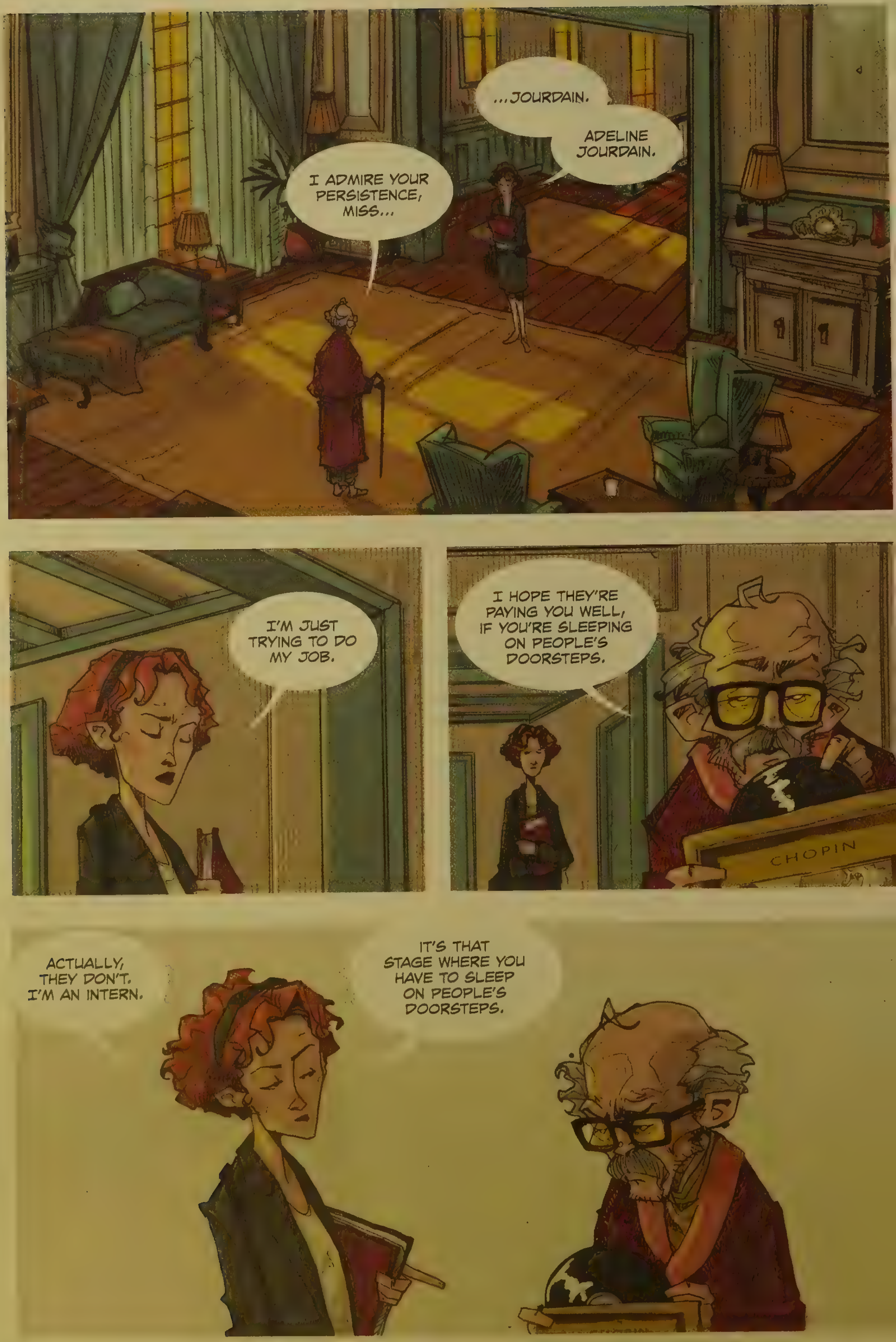

WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'LL ASK ME THAT I HAVEN'T BEEN ASKED BEFORE?
"WHY DON'T YOU LEAVE THE HOUSE?"
...THAT'S USUALLY WHERE THEY START.
IF I DIDN'T HAVE ANYTHING NEW TO SAY BACK WHEN I PLAYED THE PIANO...
...I SURE AS HELL HAVE NOTHING NEW TO SAY NOW.
BUT, MONSIEUR... I ASKED THE NEWSPAPER TO DO THIS INTERVIEW.
I TRAVELLED MANY MILES TO BE HERE WITH YOU TODAY.
I KNOW YOUR CAREER AND--

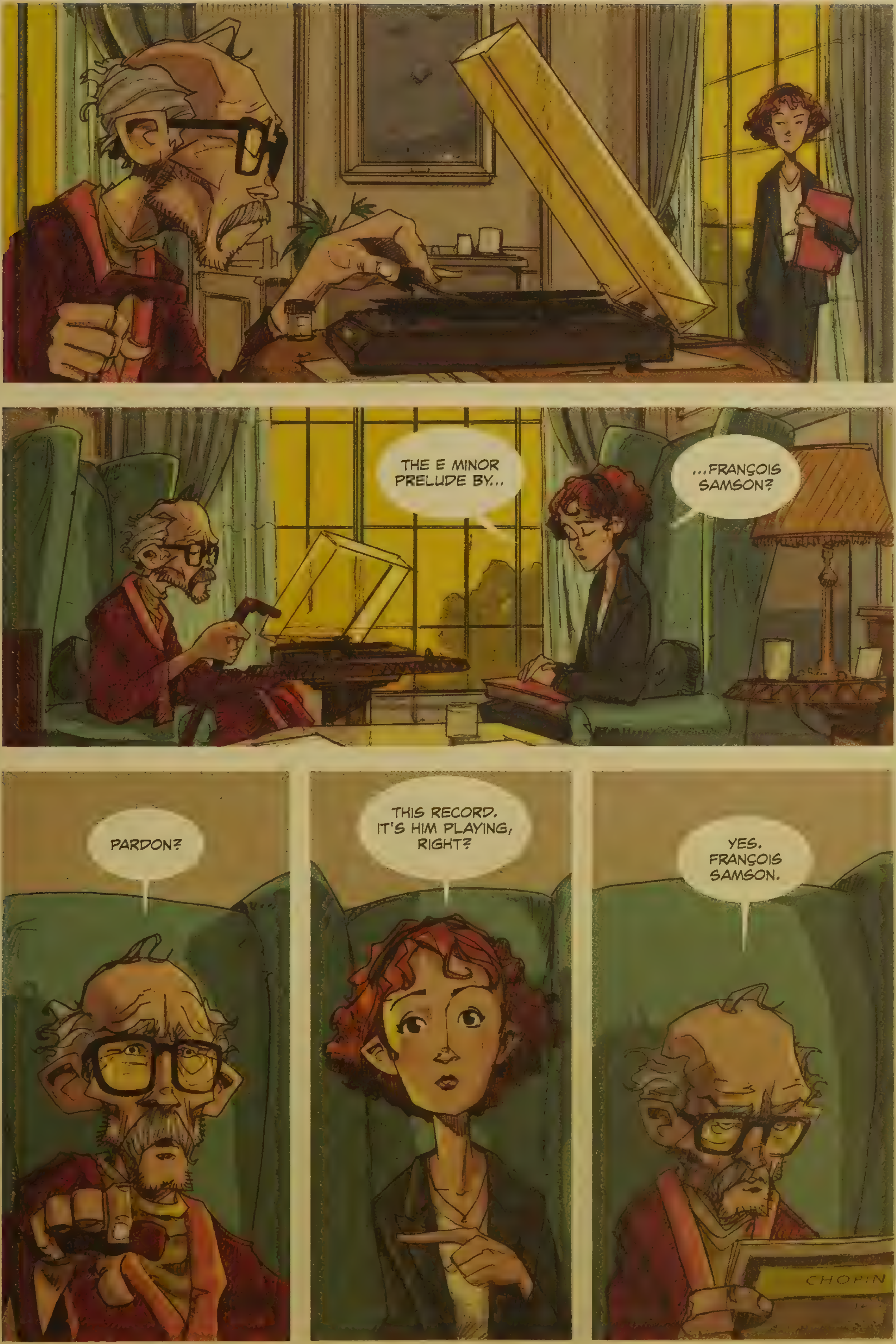

CAREER?! GIVE ME A BREAK.
A PILE OF *BULLSHIT*. ONE GIANT LIE.
JUST LIKE EVERYTHING YOU SEE HANGING ON THE WALLS OF THIS HOUSE.
THE PERSON YOU'RE LOOKING FOR HAS BEEN DEAD FOR A LONG TIME.
ANYTHING ELSE?
...
I THOUGHT SO. MARGUERITE WILL WALK YOU TO THE DOOR.
...BUT--

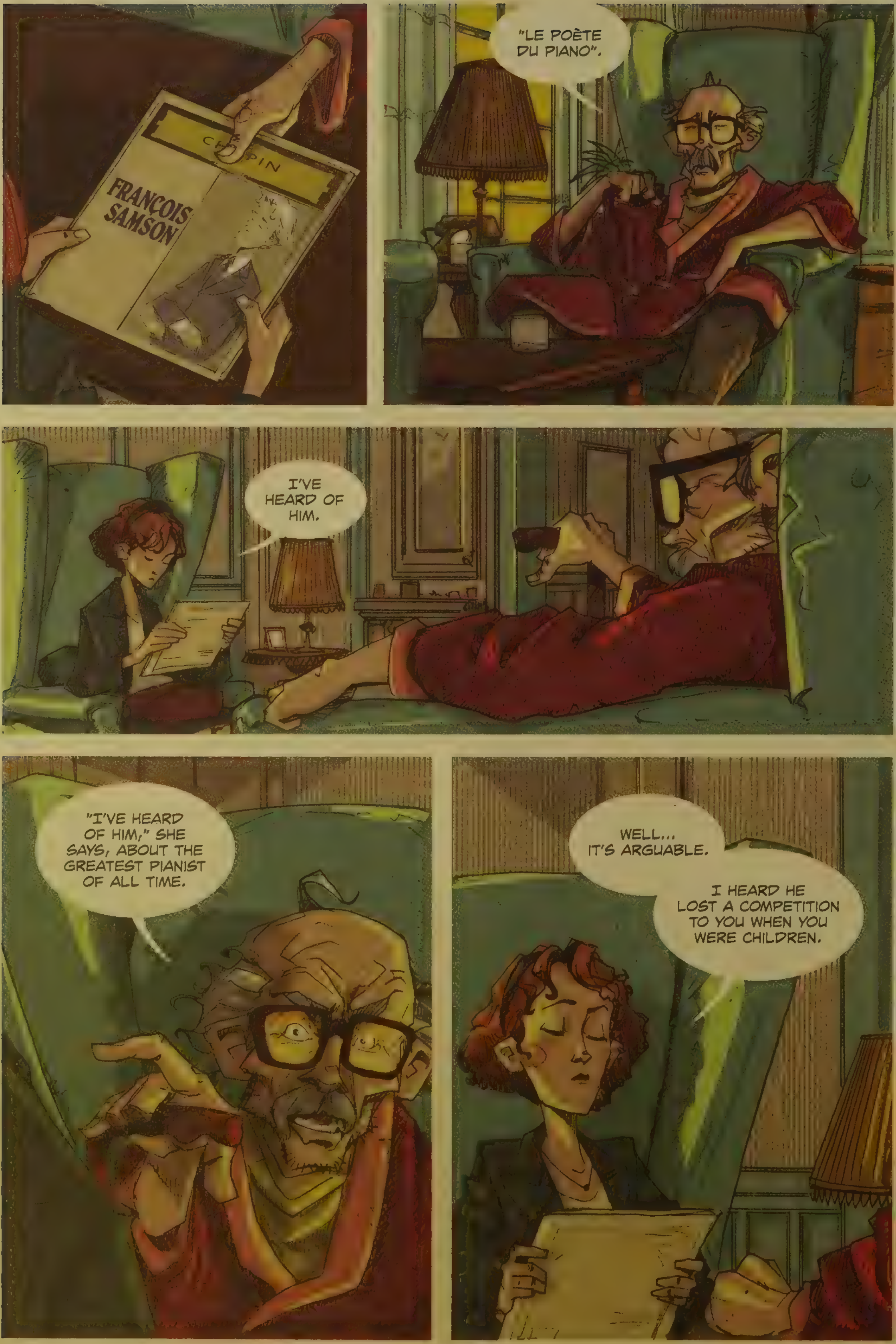

EXCUSE ME.
WAIT... I...
BLAM!

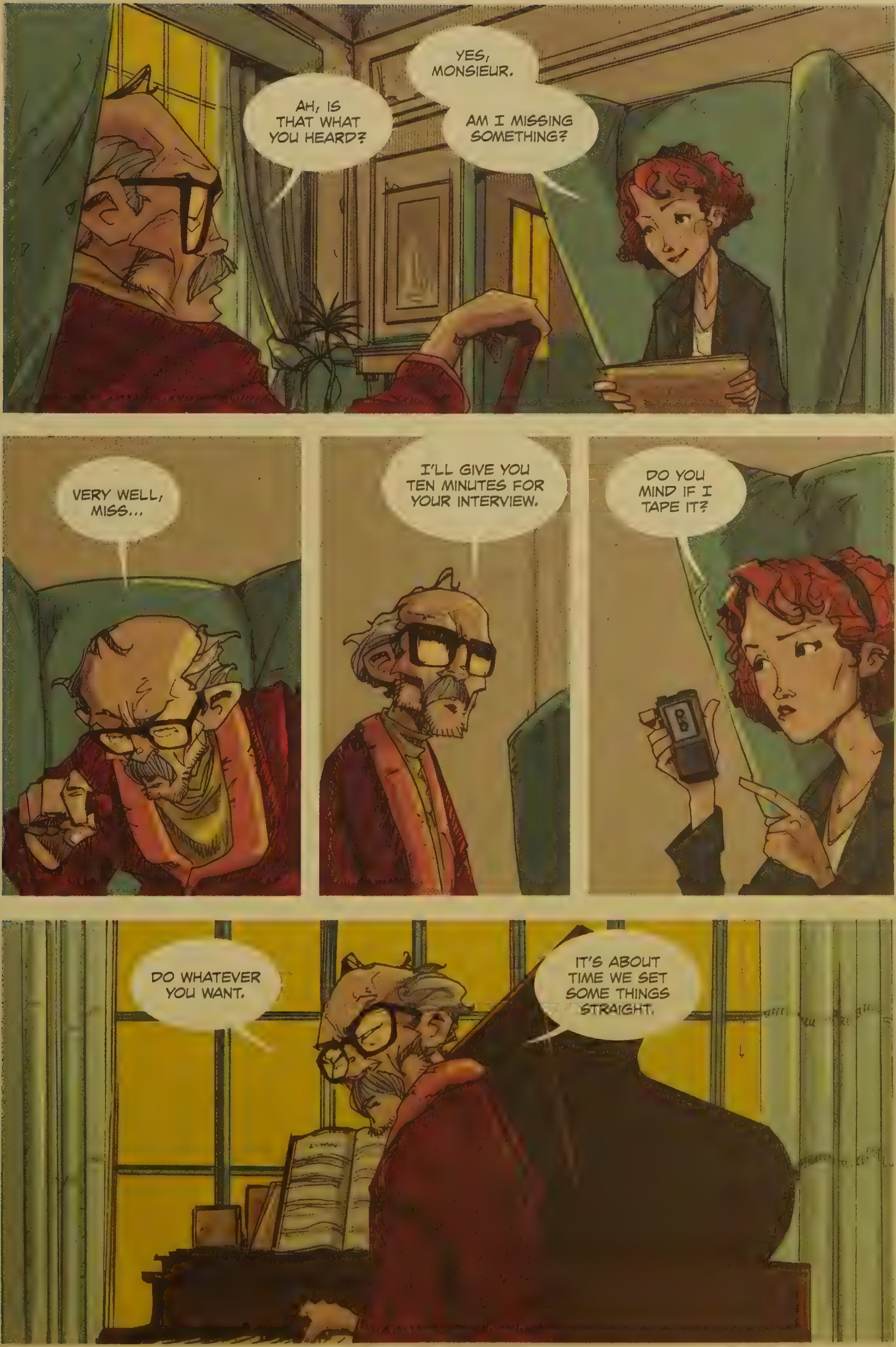



MISS...
THE MAESTRO WILL SEE YOU NOW.
I'M SORRY, MAY I USE YOUR BATHROOM?


I ADMIRE YOUR PERSISTENCE, MISS...
...JOURDAIN.
ADELINE JOURDAIN.
I'M JUST TRYING TO DO MY JOB.
I HOPE THEY'RE PAYING YOU WELL, IF YOU'RE SLEEPING ON PEOPLE'S DOORSTEPS.
CHOPIN
ACTUALLY, THEY DON'T. I'M AN INTERN.
IT'S THAT STAGE WHERE YOU HAVE TO SLEEP ON PEOPLE'S DOORSTEPS.

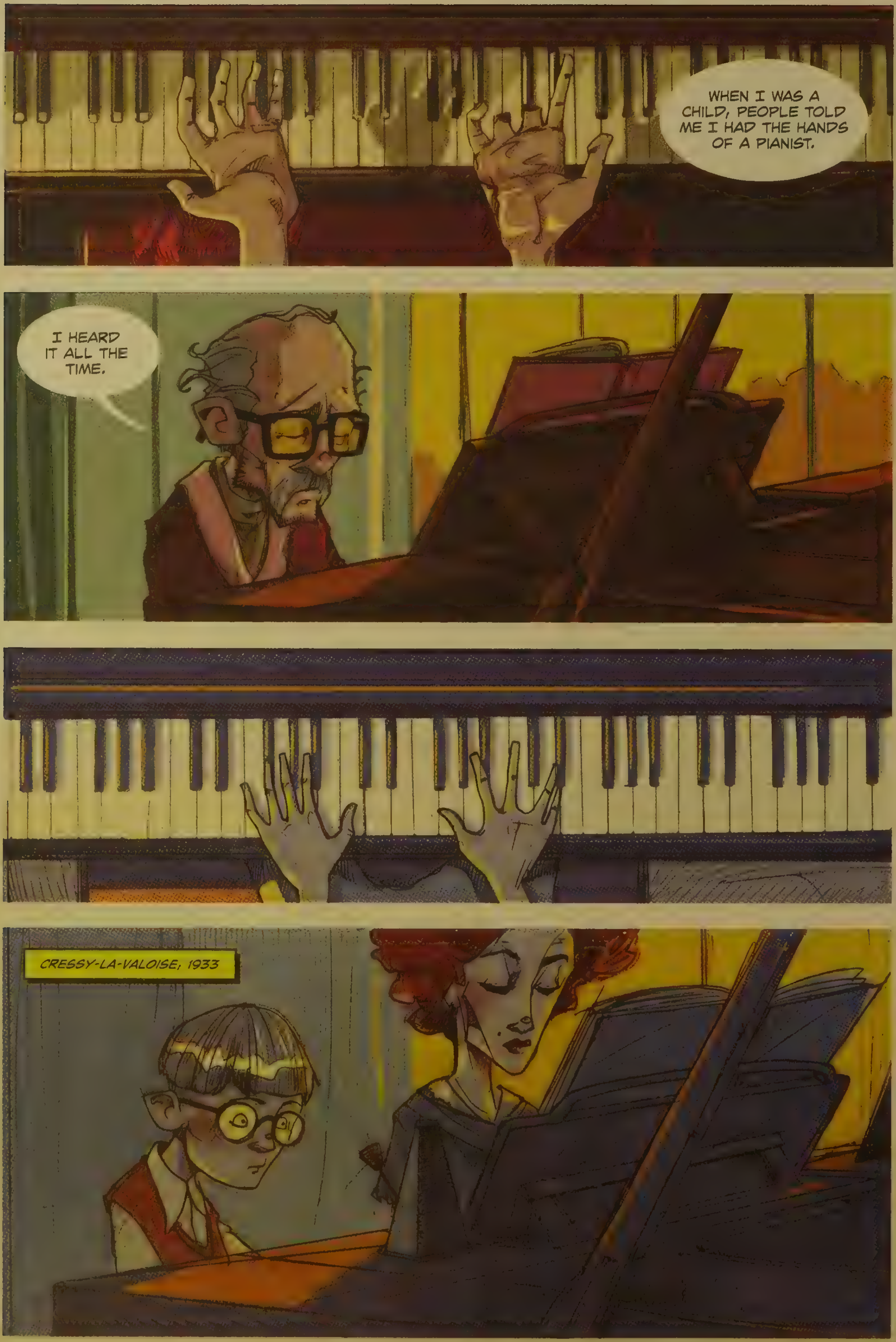

THE E MINOR PRELUDE BY...
...FRANÇOIS SAMSON?
PARDON?
THIS RECORD. IT'S HIM PLAYING, RIGHT?
YES. FRANÇOIS SAMSON.
CHOPIN

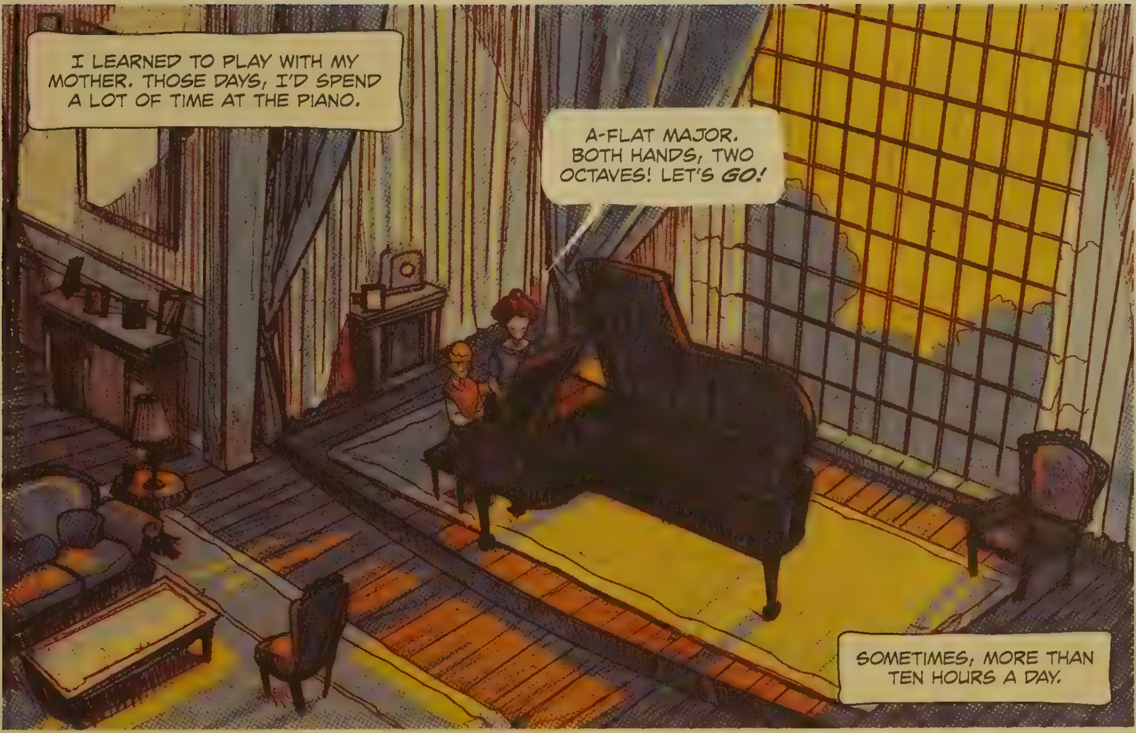

CHOPIN
FRANCOIS SAMSON
"LE POÈTE DU PIANO".
I'VE HEARD OF HIM.
"I'VE HEARD OF HIM," SHE SAYS, ABOUT THE GREATEST PIANIST OF ALL TIME.
WELL... IT'S ARGUABLE.
I HEARD HE LOST A COMPETITION TO YOU WHEN YOU WERE CHILDREN.

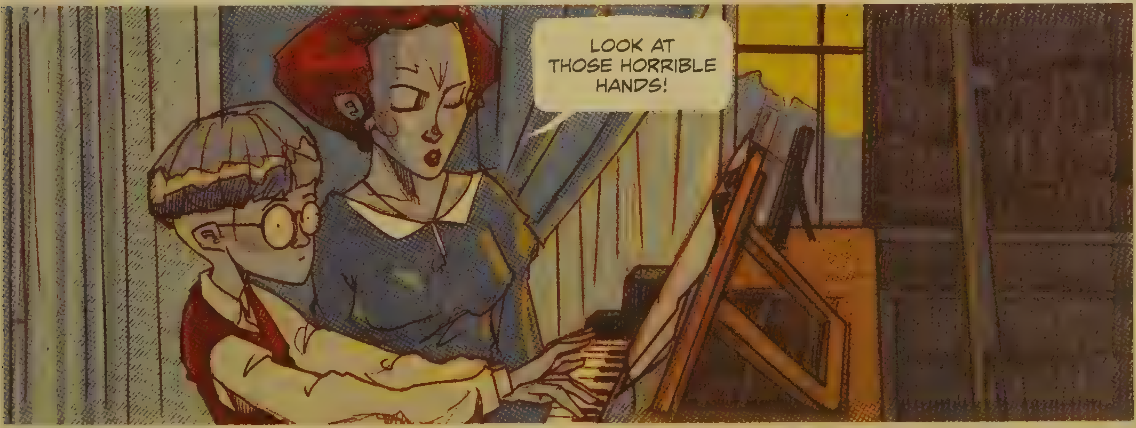

AH, IS THAT WHAT YOU HEARD?
YES, MONSIEUR.
AM I MISSING SOMETHING?
VERY WELL, MISS...
I'LL GIVE YOU TEN MINUTES FOR YOUR INTERVIEW.
DO YOU MIND IF I TAPE IT?
DO WHATEVER YOU WANT.
IT'S ABOUT TIME WE SET SOME THINGS STRAIGHT.

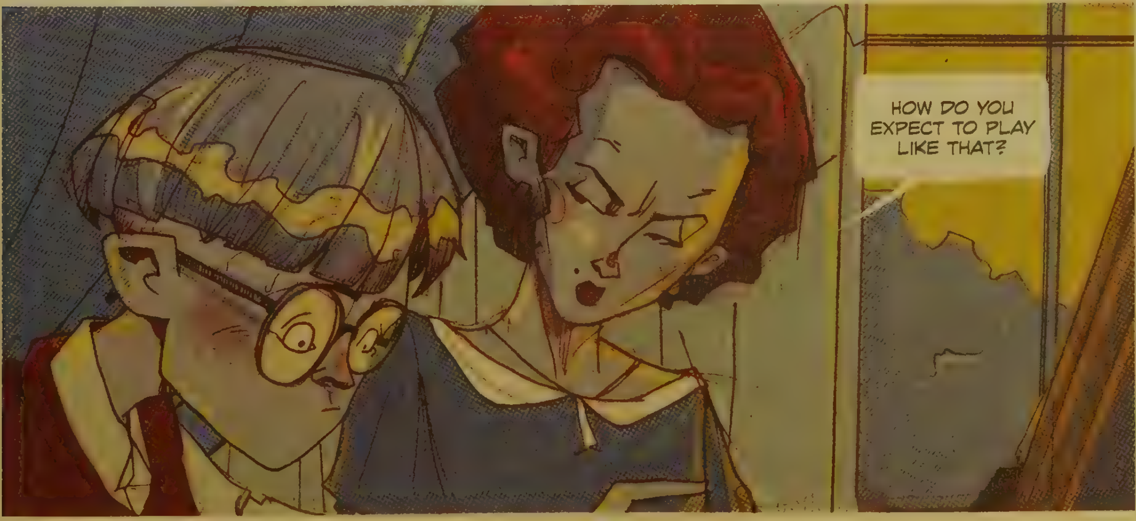
I

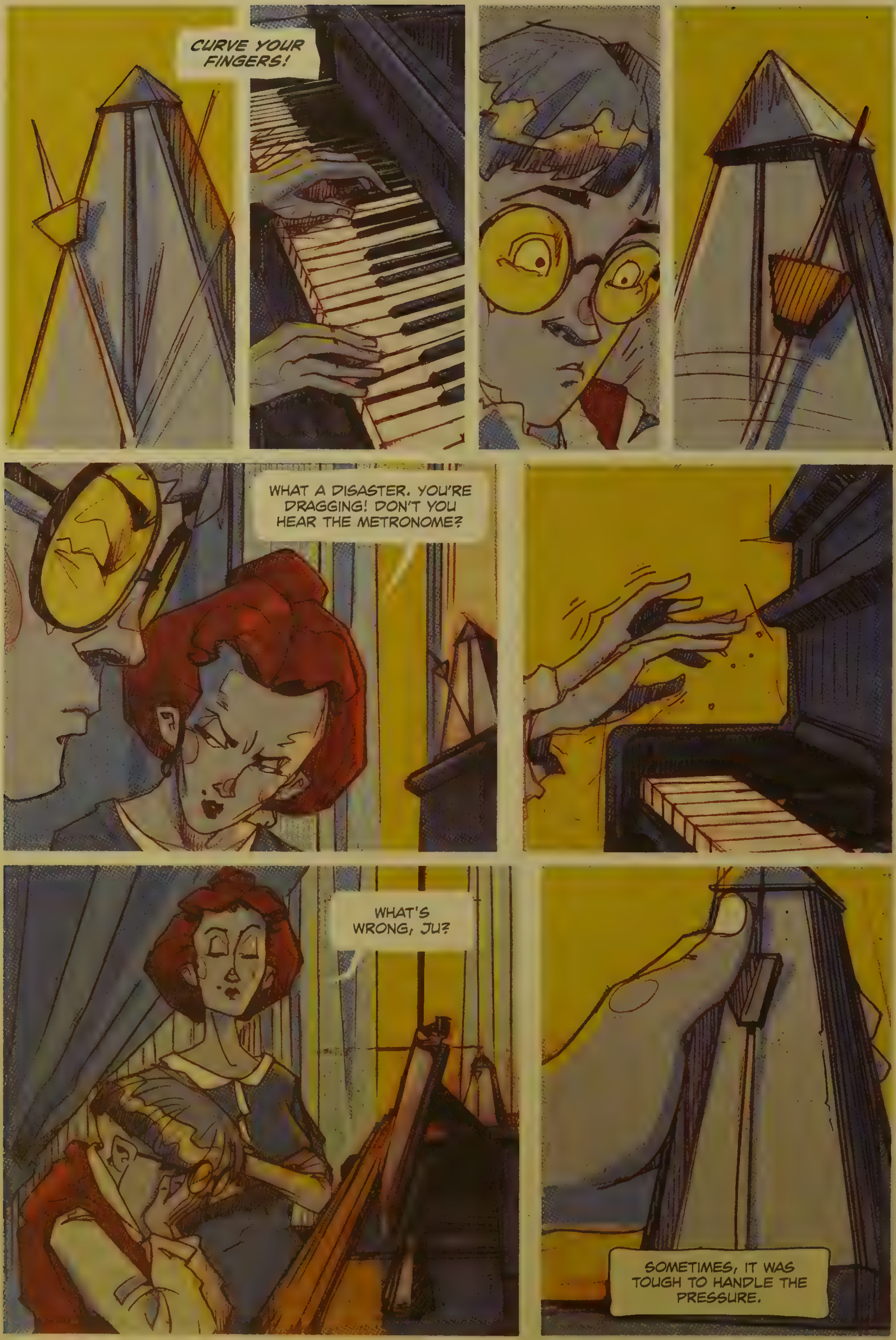
Julien Dubois

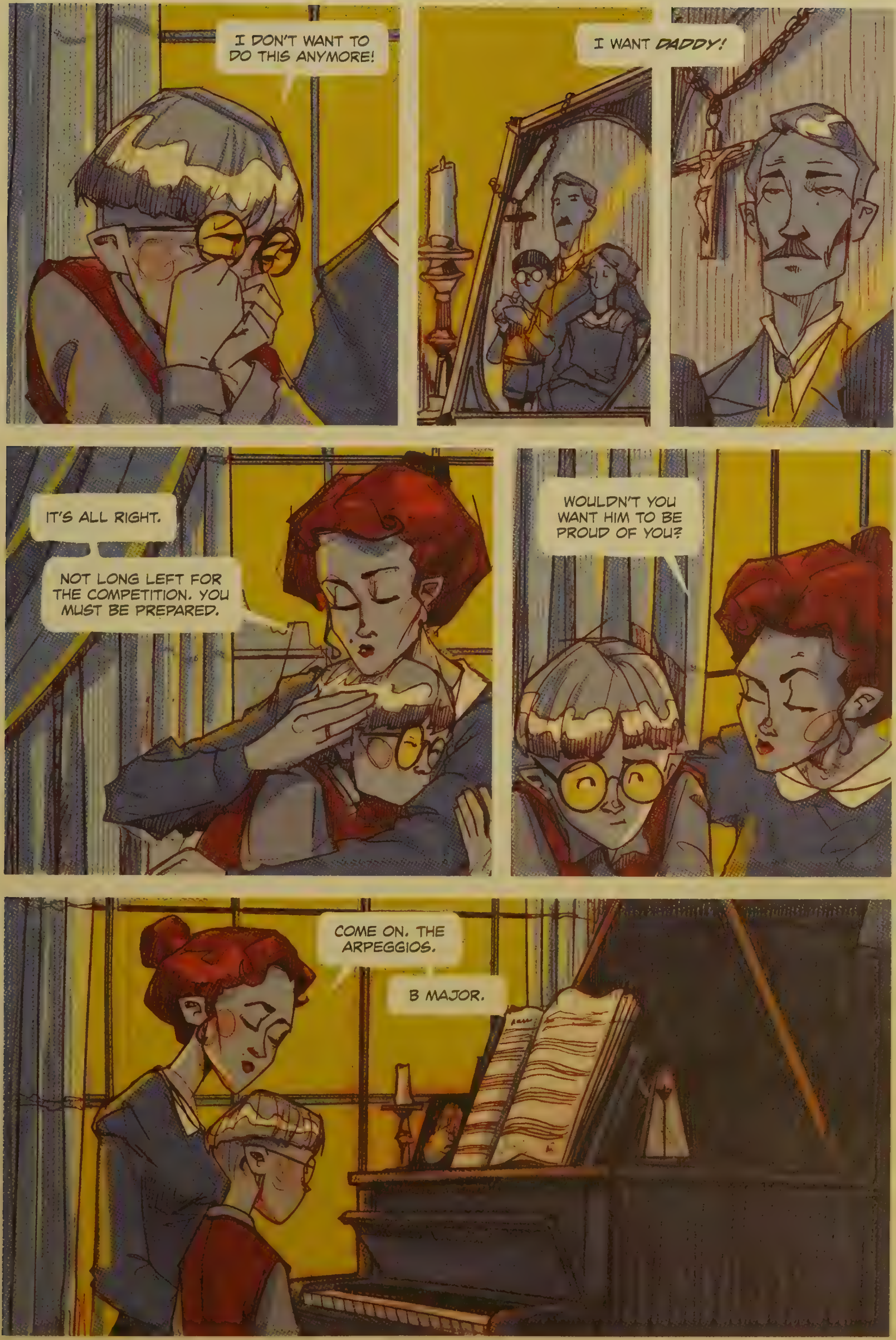

WHEN I WAS A CHILD, PEOPLE TOLD ME I HAD THE HANDS OF A PIANIST.
I HEARD IT ALL THE TIME.
CRESSY-LA-VALOISE, 1933

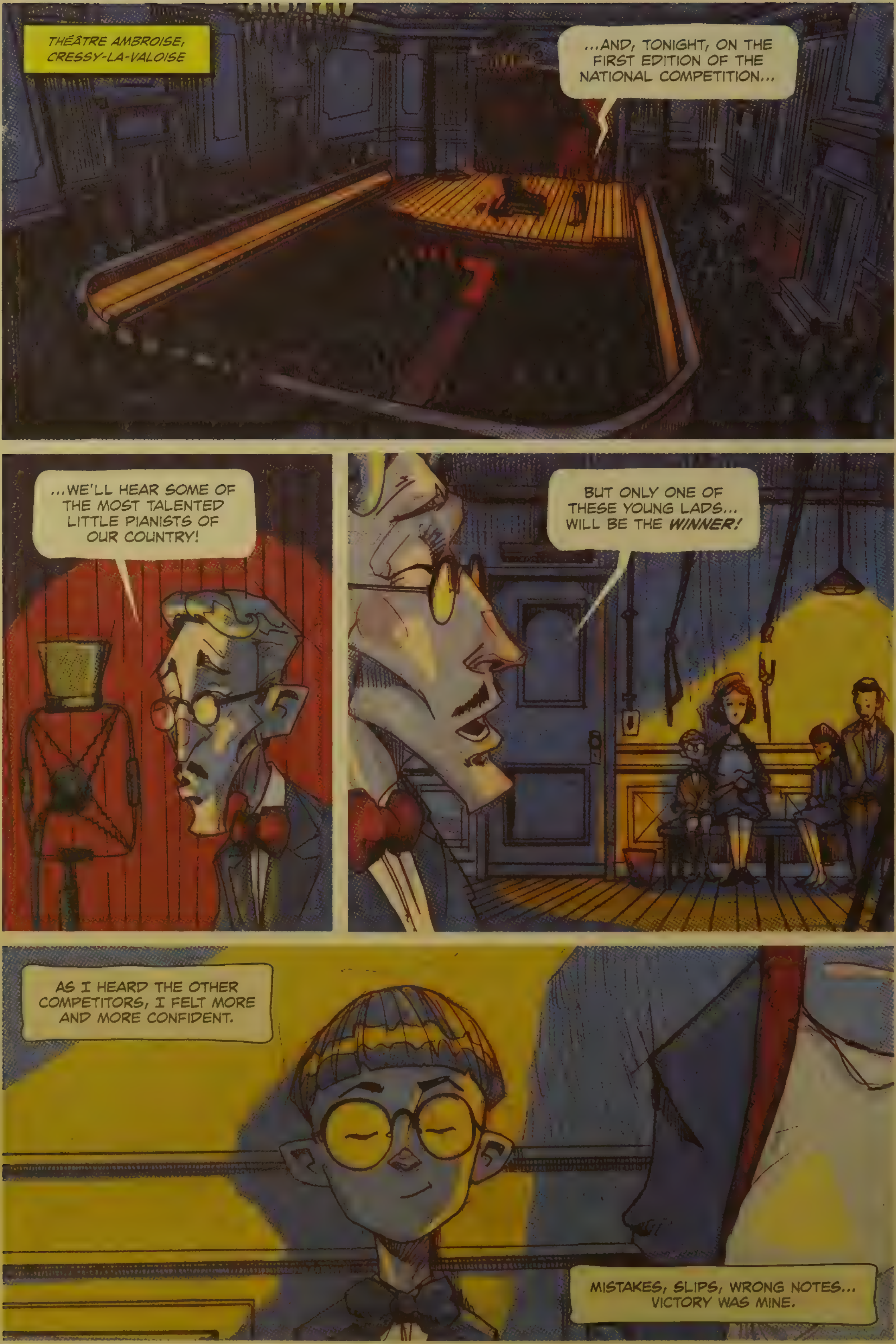

I LEARNED TO PLAY WITH MY MOTHER. THOSE DAYS, I'D SPEND A LOT OF TIME AT THE PIANO.
A-FLAT MAJOR. BOTH HANDS, TWO OCTAVES! LET'S *GO!*
SOMETIMES, MORE THAN TEN HOURS A DAY.

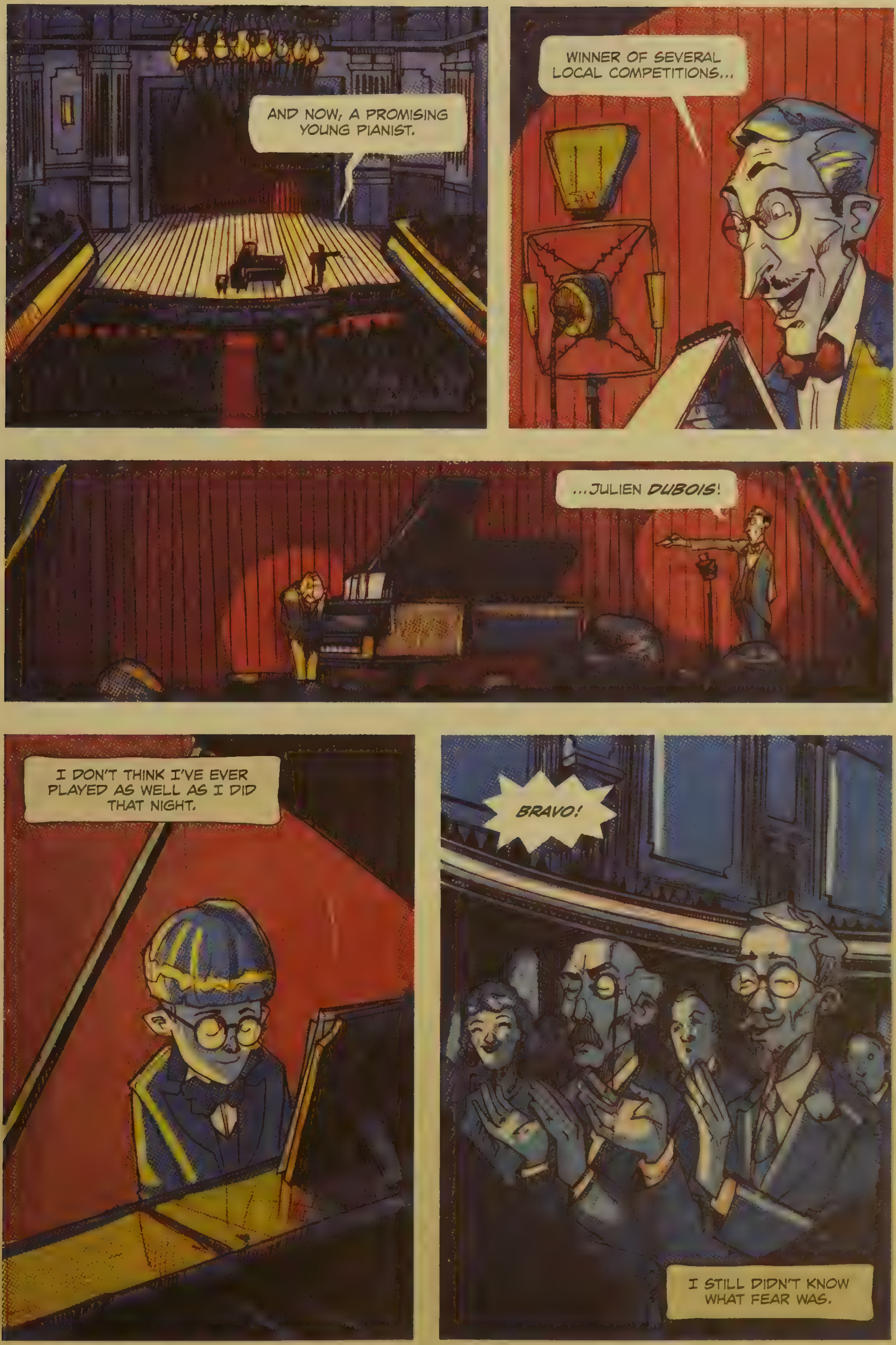

LOOK AT THOSE HORRIBLE HANDS!

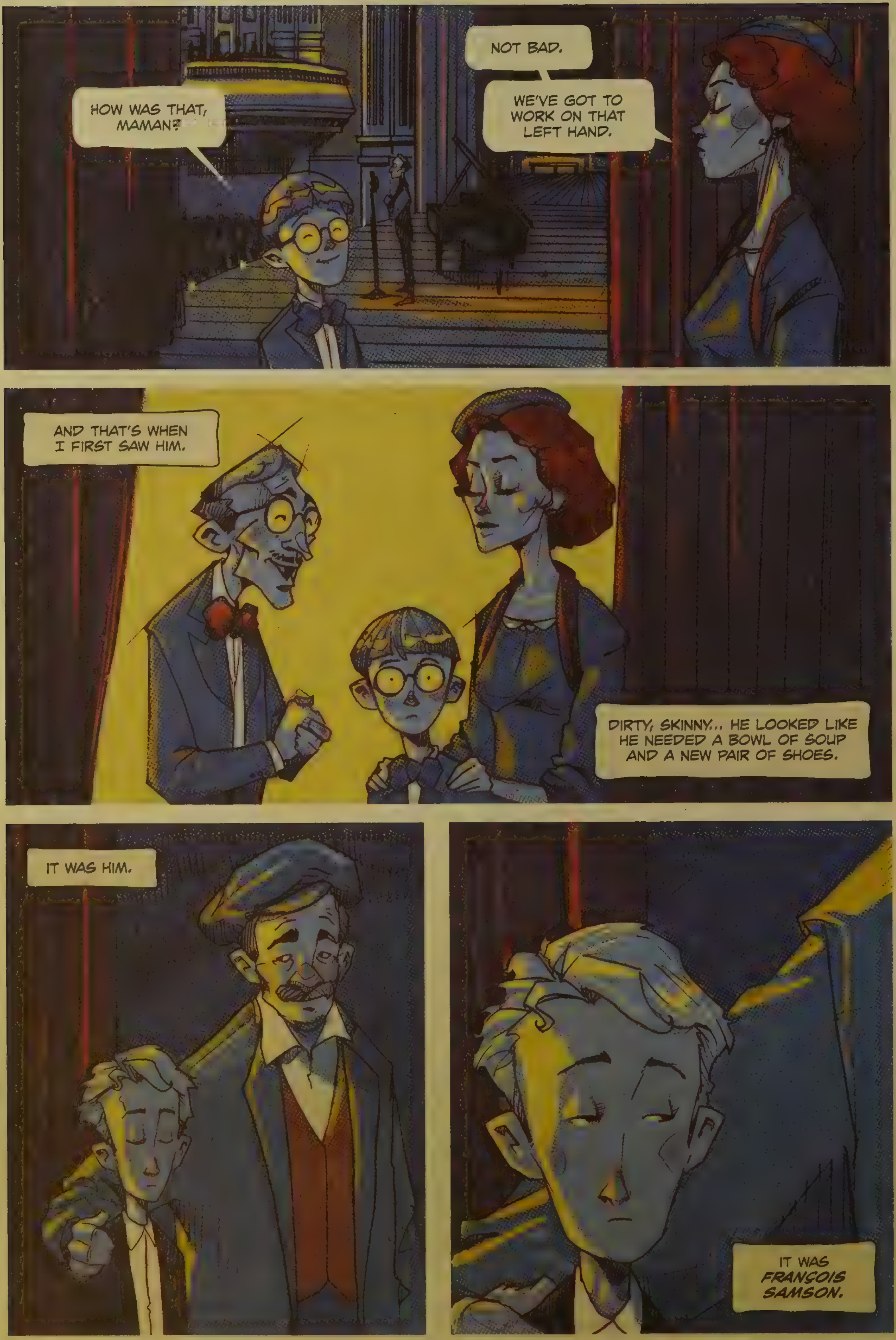

HOW DO YOU EXPECT TO PLAY LIKE THAT?

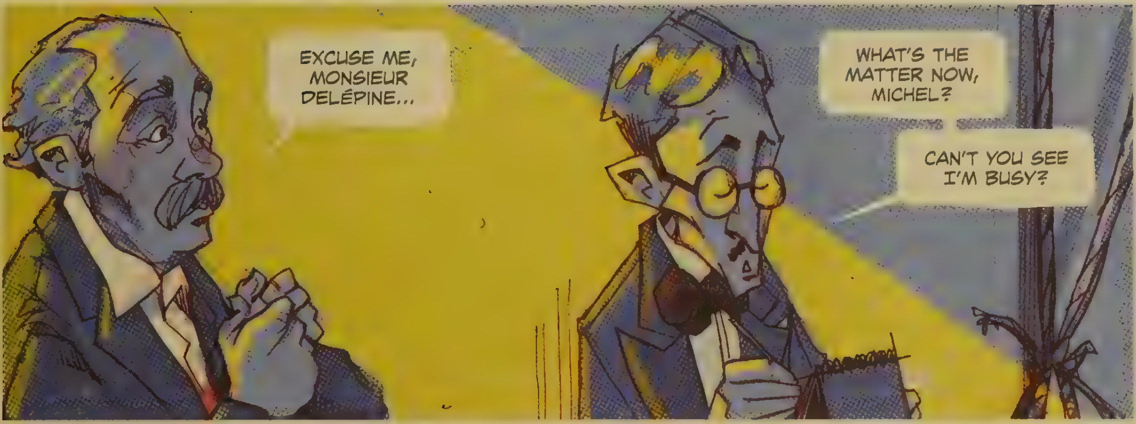

CURVE YOUR FINGERS!
WHAT A DISASTER. YOU'RE DRAGGING! DON'T YOU HEAR THE METRONOME?
WHAT'S WRONG, JU?
SOMETIMES, IT WAS TOUGH TO HANDLE THE PRESSURE.

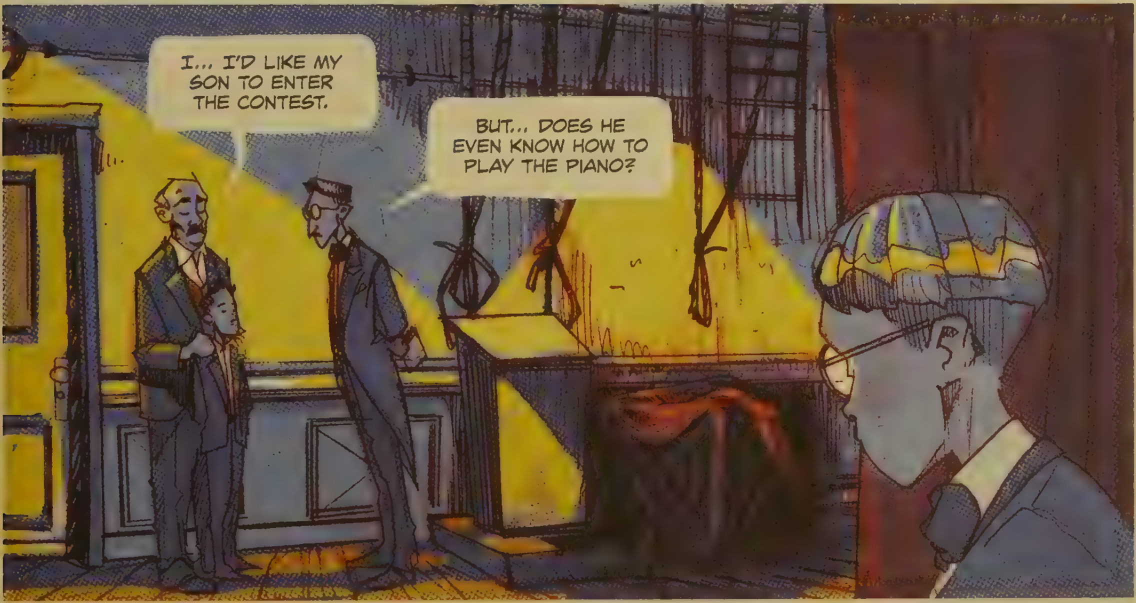

I DON'T WANT TO DO THIS ANYMORE!
I WANT *DADDY!*
IT'S ALL RIGHT.
NOT LONG LEFT FOR THE COMPETITION. YOU MUST BE PREPARED.
WOULDN'T YOU WANT HIM TO BE PROUD OF YOU?
COME ON. THE ARPEGGIOS.
B MAJOR.

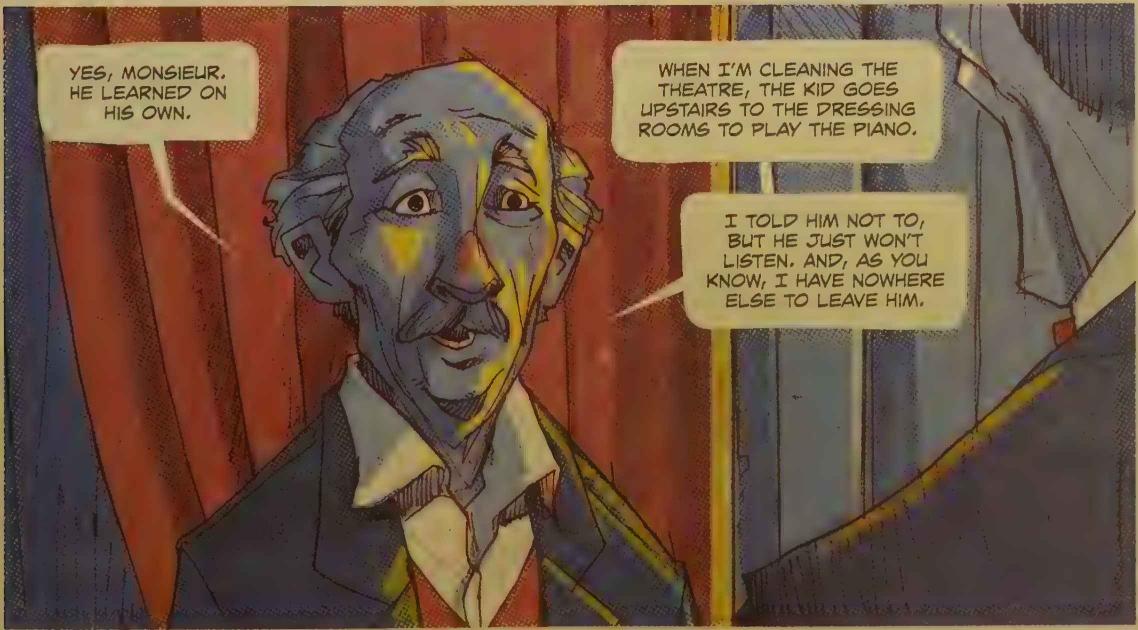

THÉÂTRE AMBROISE, CRESSY-LA-VALOISE
...AND, TONIGHT, ON THE FIRST EDITION OF THE NATIONAL COMPETITION...
...WE'LL HEAR SOME OF THE MOST TALENTED LITTLE PIANISTS OF OUR COUNTRY!
BUT ONLY ONE OF THESE YOUNG LADS... WILL BE THE *WINNER!*
AS I HEARD THE OTHER COMPETITORS, I FELT MORE AND MORE CONFIDENT.
MISTAKES, SLIPS, WRONG NOTES... VICTORY WAS MINE.

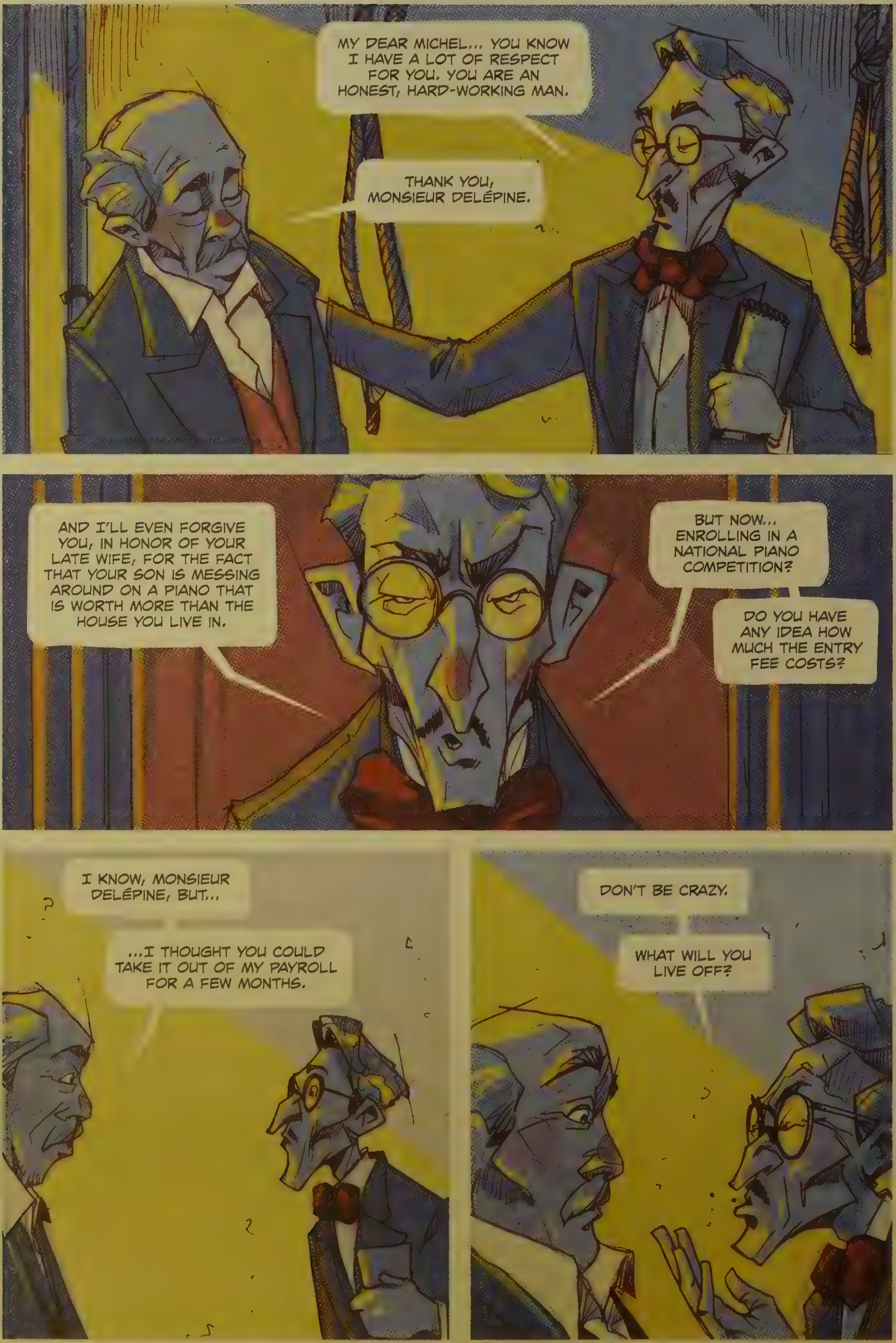

AND NOW, A PROMISING YOUNG PIANIST.
WINNER OF SEVERAL LOCAL COMPETITIONS...
...JULIEN *DUBOIS*!
I DON'T THINK I'VE EVER PLAYED AS WELL AS I DID THAT NIGHT.
BRAVO!
I STILL DIDN'T KNOW WHAT FEAR WAS.

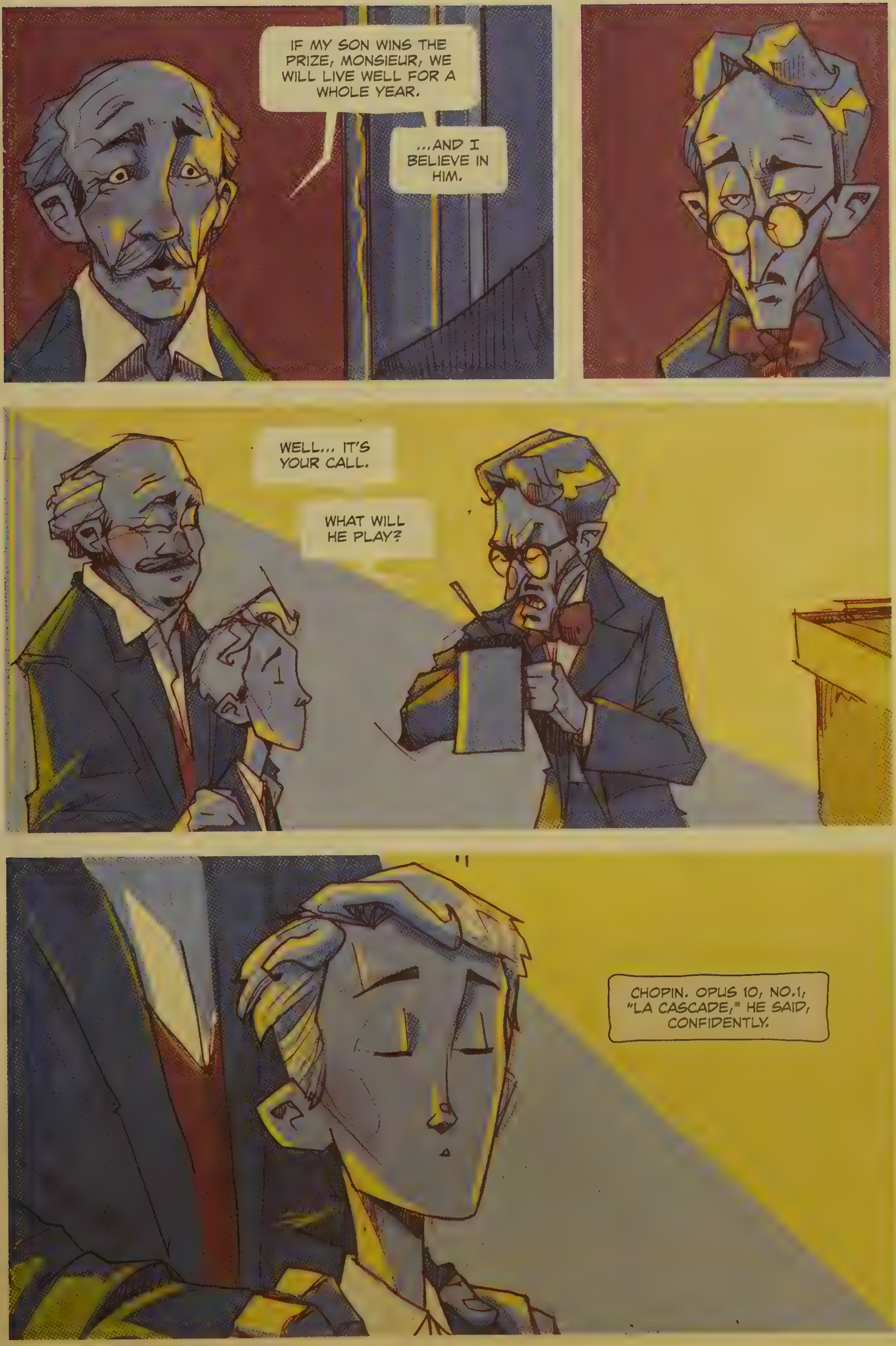

HOW WAS THAT, MAMAN?
NOT BAD.
WE'VE GOT TO WORK ON THAT LEFT HAND.
AND THAT'S WHEN I FIRST SAW HIM.
DIRTY, SKINNY... HE LOOKED LIKE HE NEEDED A BOWL OF SOUP AND A NEW PAIR OF SHOES.
IT WAS HIM.
IT WAS *FRANCOIS SAMSON.*

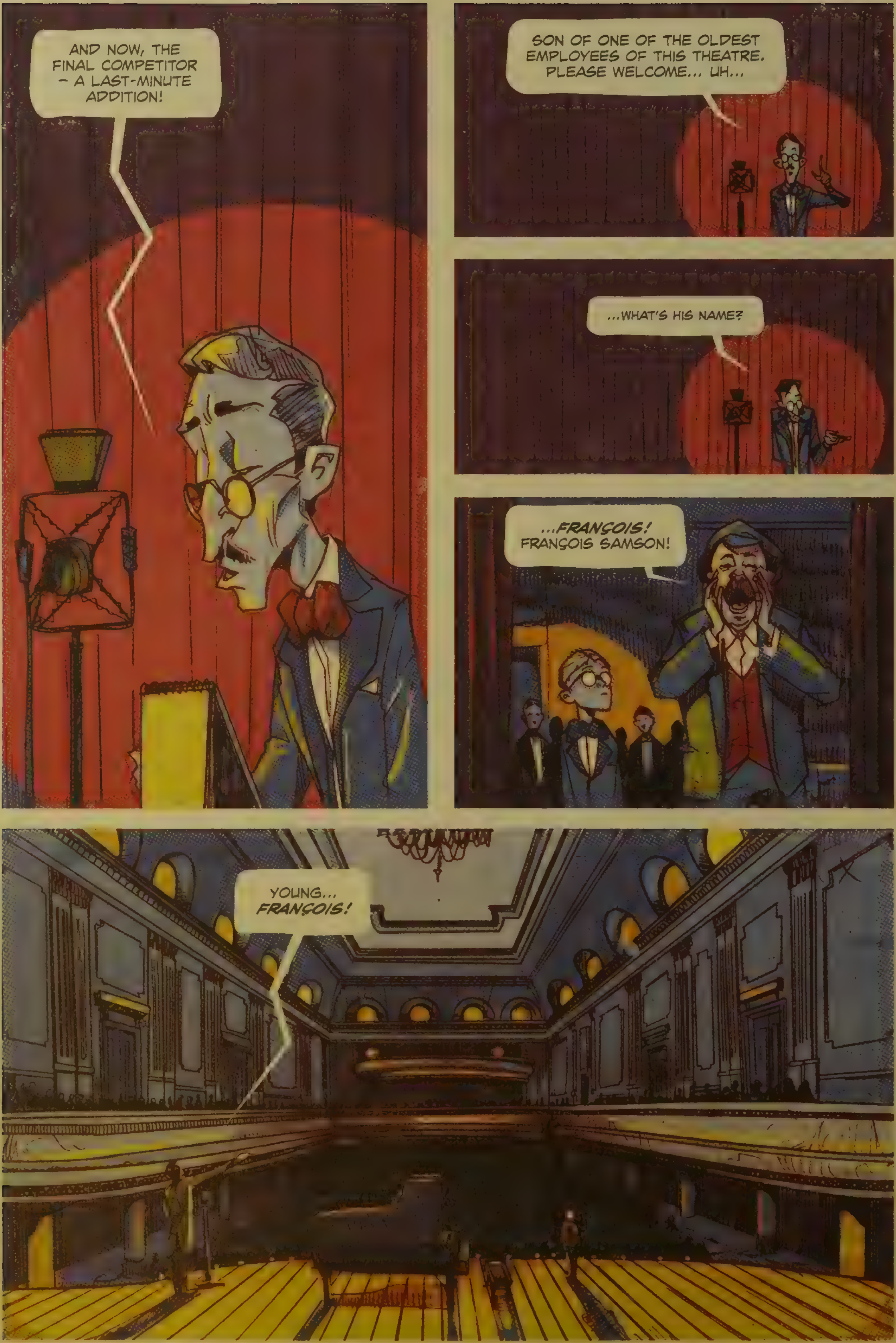

EXCUSE ME, MONSIEUR DELÉPINE...
WHAT'S THE MATTER NOW, MICHEL?
CAN'T YOU SEE I'M BUSY?

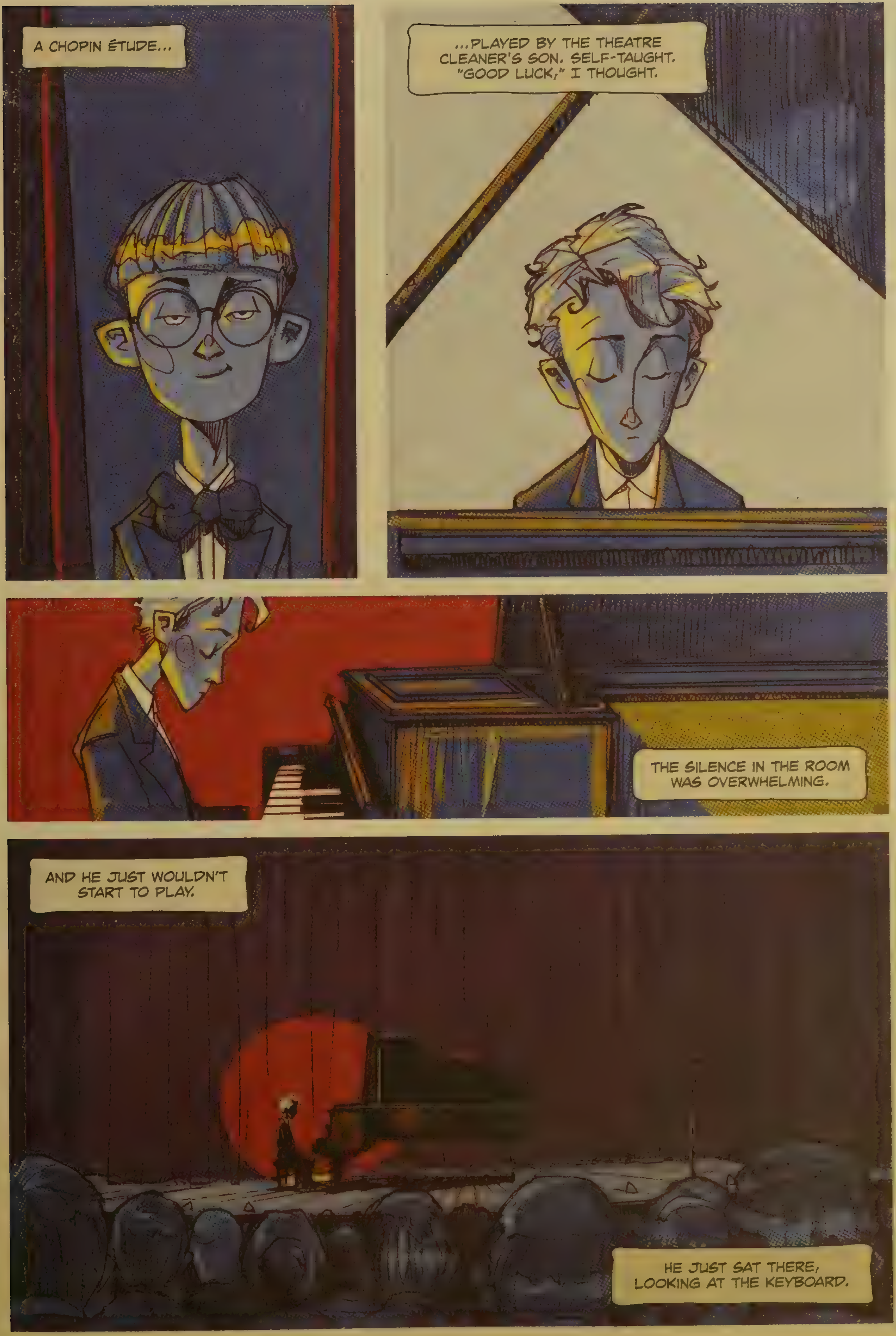

I... I'D LIKE MY SON TO ENTER THE CONTEST.
BUT... DOES HE EVEN KNOW HOW TO PLAY THE PIANO?

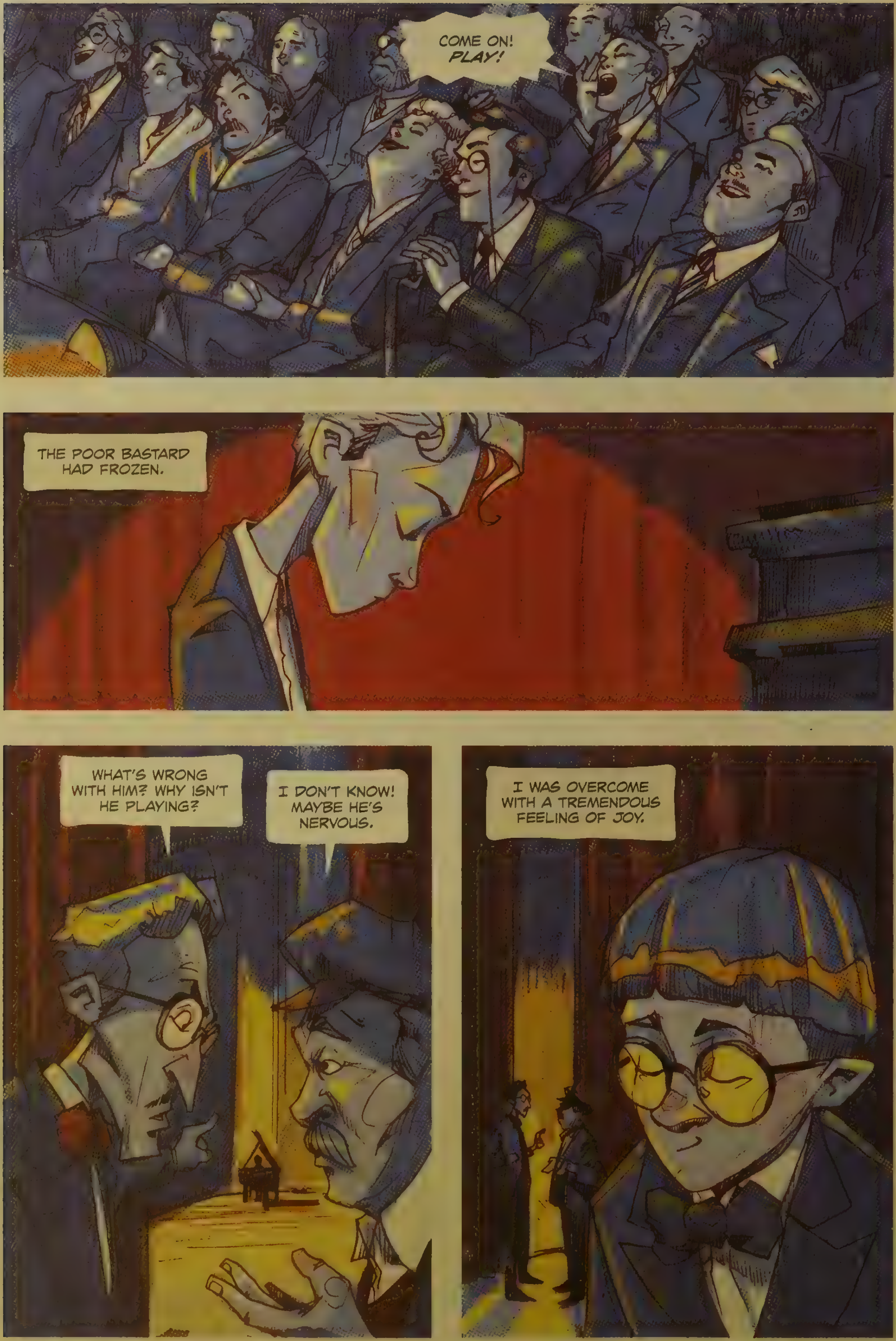

YES, MONSIEUR. HE LEARNED ON HIS OWN.
WHEN I'M CLEANING THE THEATRE, THE KID GOES UPSTAIRS TO THE DRESSING ROOMS TO PLAY THE PIANO.
I TOLD HIM NOT TO, BUT HE JUST WON'T LISTEN. AND, AS YOU KNOW, I HAVE NOWHERE ELSE TO LEAVE HIM.

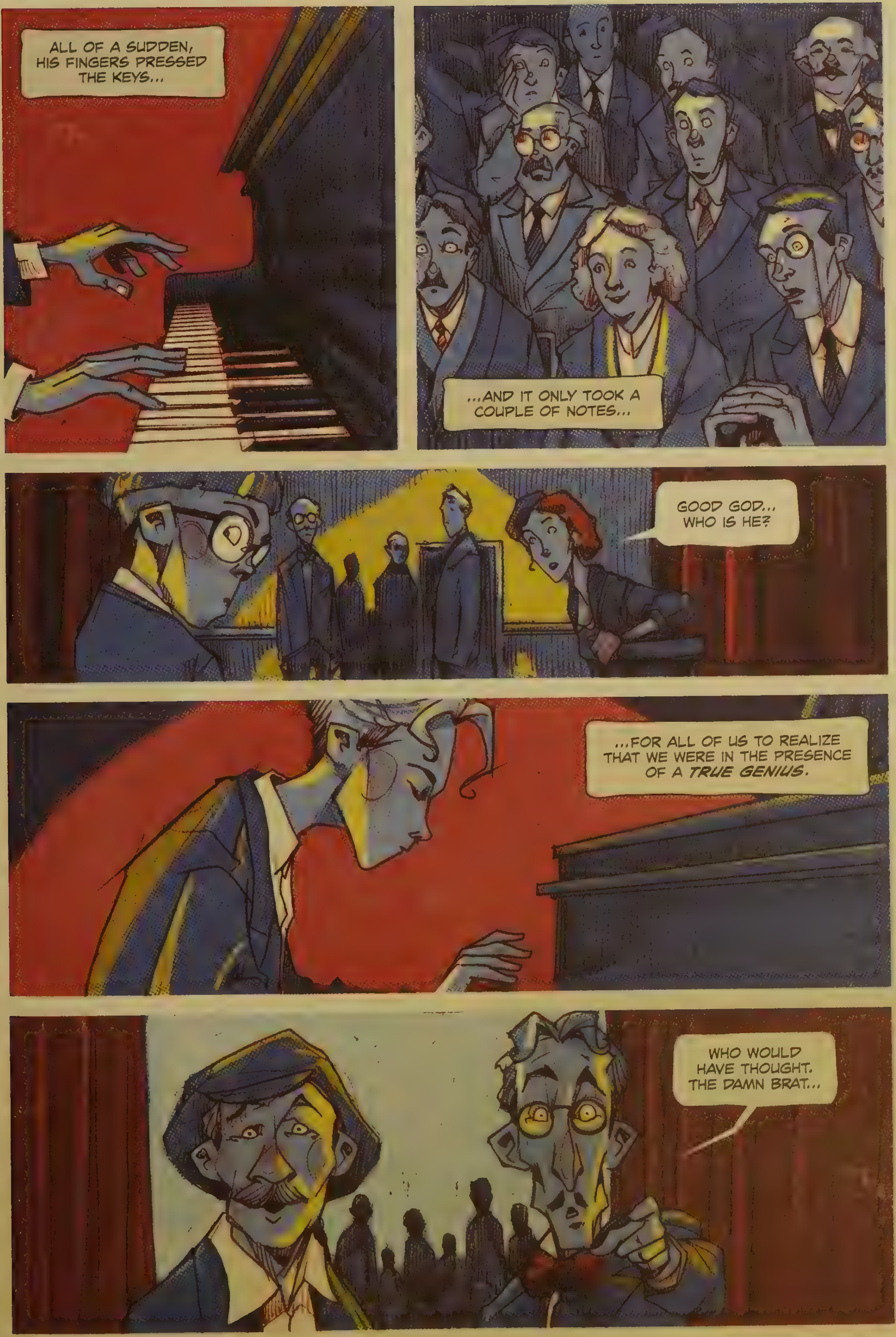

MY DEAR MICHEL... YOU KNOW I HAVE A LOT OF RESPECT FOR YOU. YOU ARE AN HONEST, HARD-WORKING MAN.
THANK YOU, MONSIEUR DELÉPINE.
AND I'LL EVEN FORGIVE YOU, IN HONOR OF YOUR LATE WIFE, FOR THE FACT THAT YOUR SON IS MESSING AROUND ON A PIANO THAT IS WORTH MORE THAN THE HOUSE YOU LIVE IN.
BUT NOW... ENROLLING IN A NATIONAL PIANO COMPETITION?
DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW MUCH THE ENTRY FEE COSTS?
I KNOW, MONSIEUR DELÉPINE, BUT...
...I THOUGHT YOU COULD TAKE IT OUT OF MY PAYROLL FOR A FEW MONTHS.
DON'T BE CRAZY.
WHAT WILL YOU LIVE OFF?

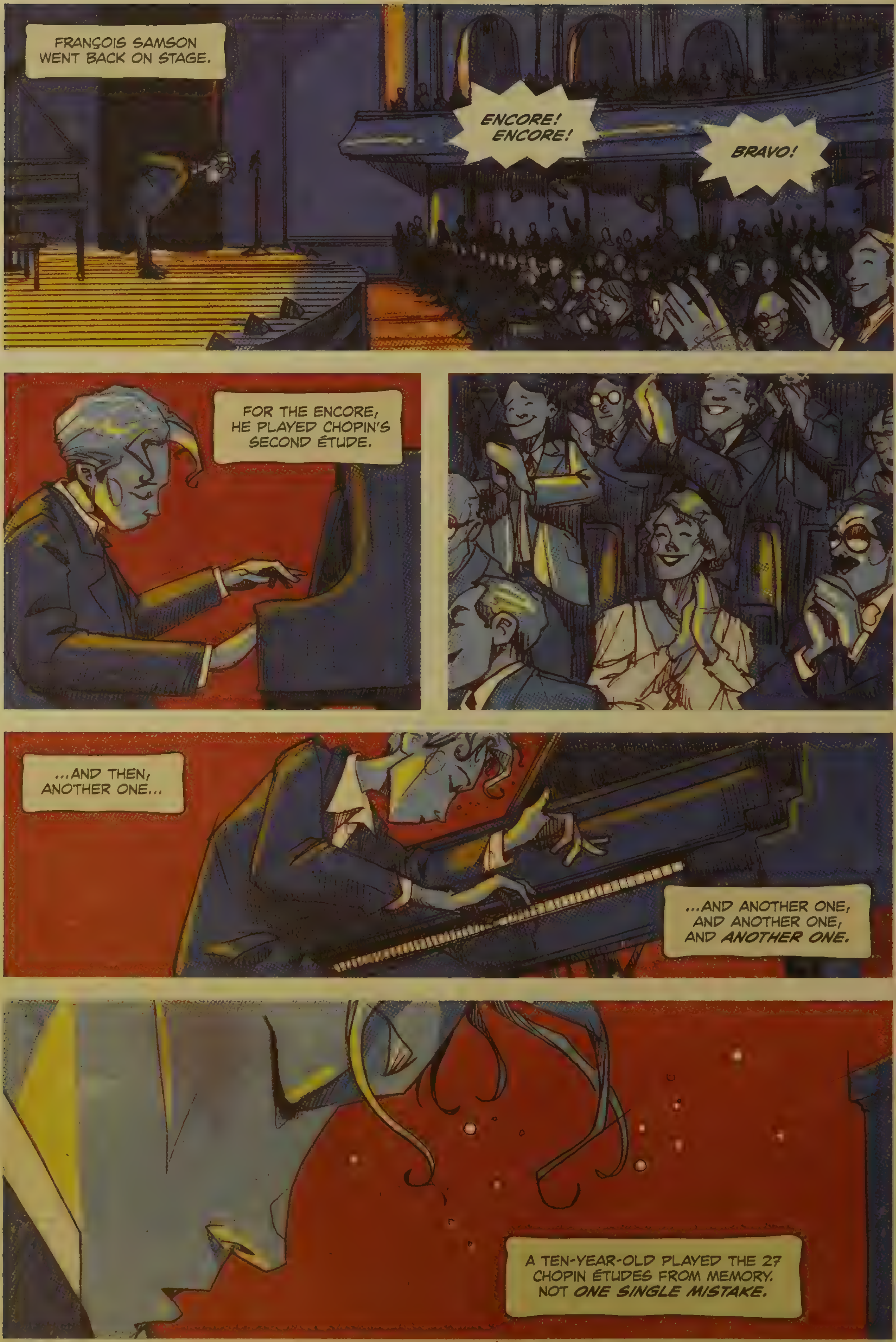

IF MY SON WINS THE PRIZE, MONSIEUR, WE WILL LIVE WELL FOR A WHOLE YEAR.
...AND I BELIEVE IN HIM.
WELL... IT'S YOUR CALL.
WHAT WILL HE PLAY?
CHOPIN. OPUS 10, NO.1, "LA CASCADE," HE SAID, CONFIDENTLY.

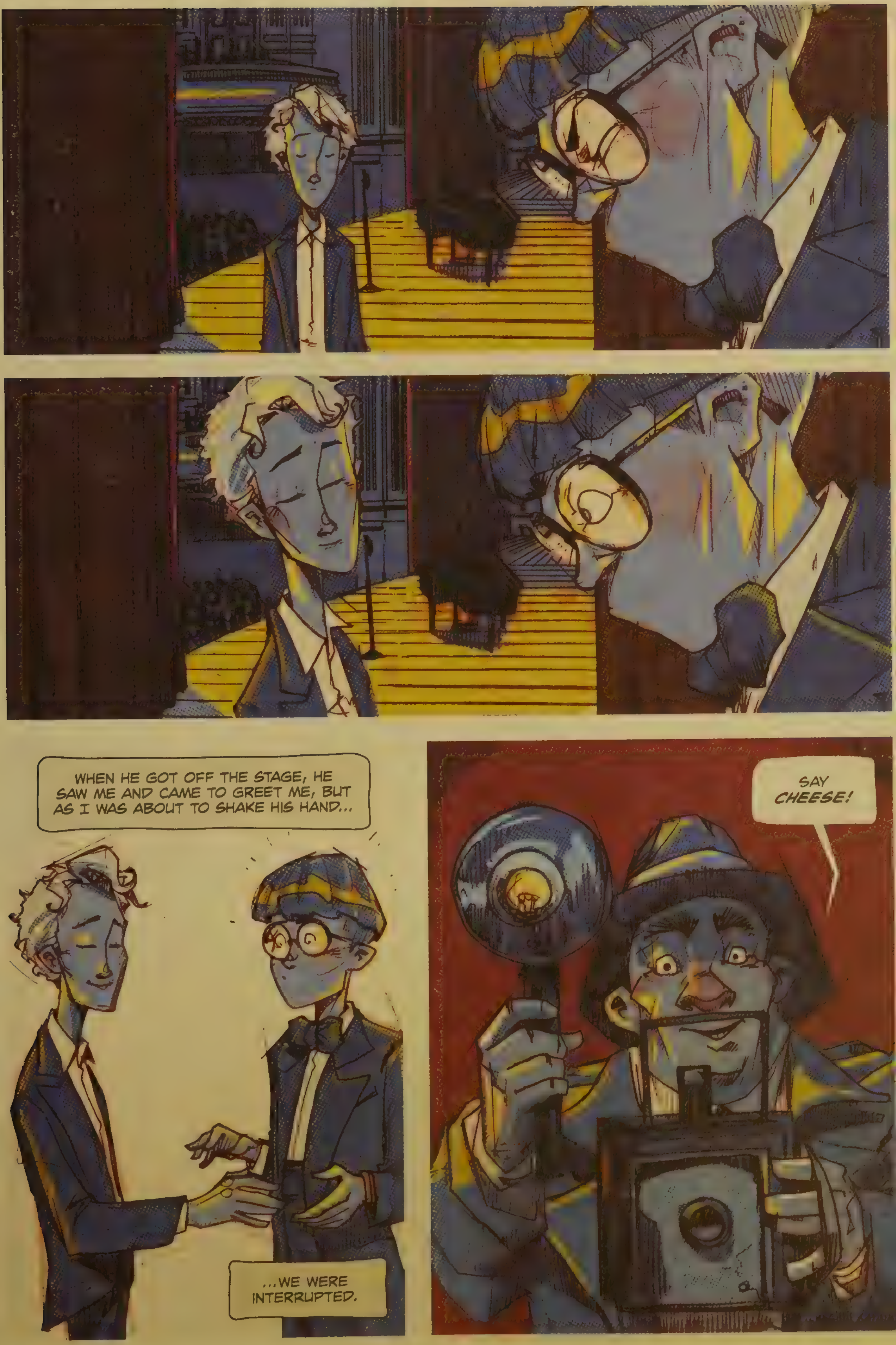

AND NOW, THE FINAL COMPETITOR – A LAST-MINUTE ADDITION!
SON OF ONE OF THE OLDEST EMPLOYEES OF THIS THEATRE. PLEASE WELCOME... UH...
...WHAT'S HIS NAME?
...*FRANÇOIS!* FRANÇOIS SAMSON!
YOUNG... *FRANÇOIS!*

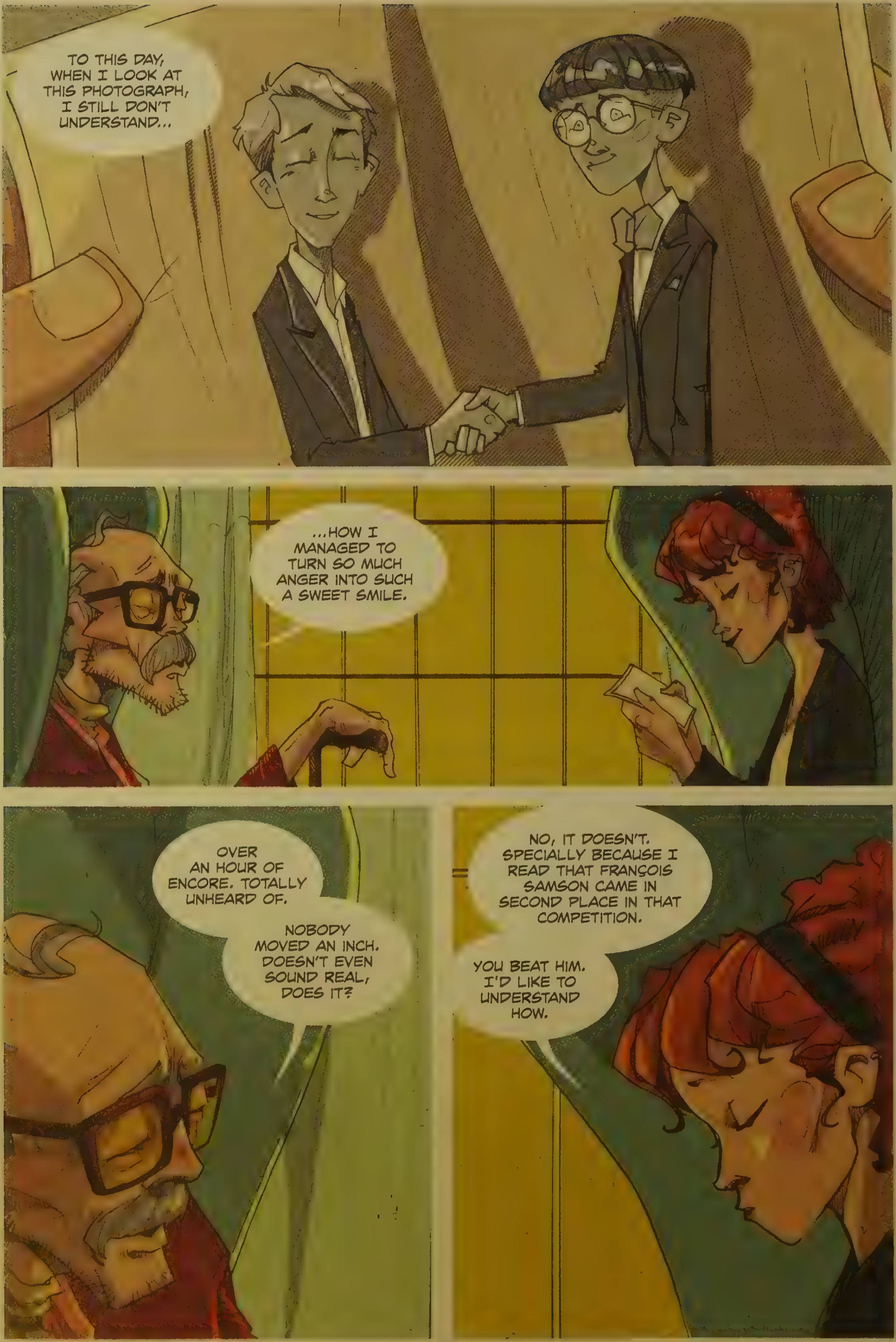

A CHOPIN ÉTUDE...
...PLAYED BY THE THEATRE CLEANER'S SON. SELF-TAUGHT. "GOOD LUCK," I THOUGHT.
THE SILENCE IN THE ROOM WAS OVERWHELMING.
AND HE JUST WOULDN'T START TO PLAY.
HE JUST SAT THERE, LOOKING AT THE KEYBOARD.

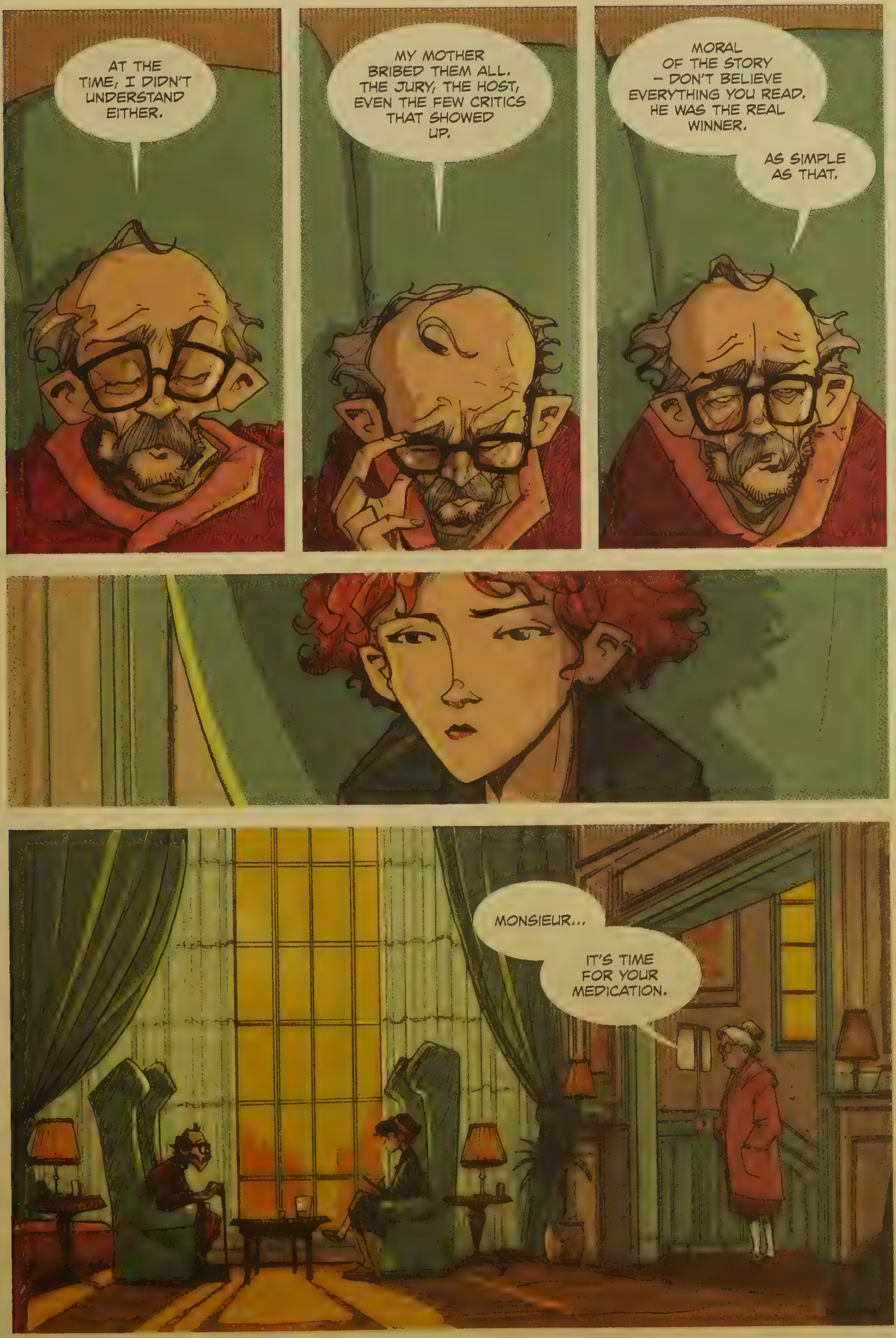

COME ON! *PLAY!*
THE POOR BASTARD HAD FROZEN.
WHAT'S WRONG WITH HIM? WHY ISN'T HE PLAYING?
I DON'T KNOW! MAYBE HE'S NERVOUS.
I WAS OVERCOME WITH A TREMENDOUS FEELING OF JOY.

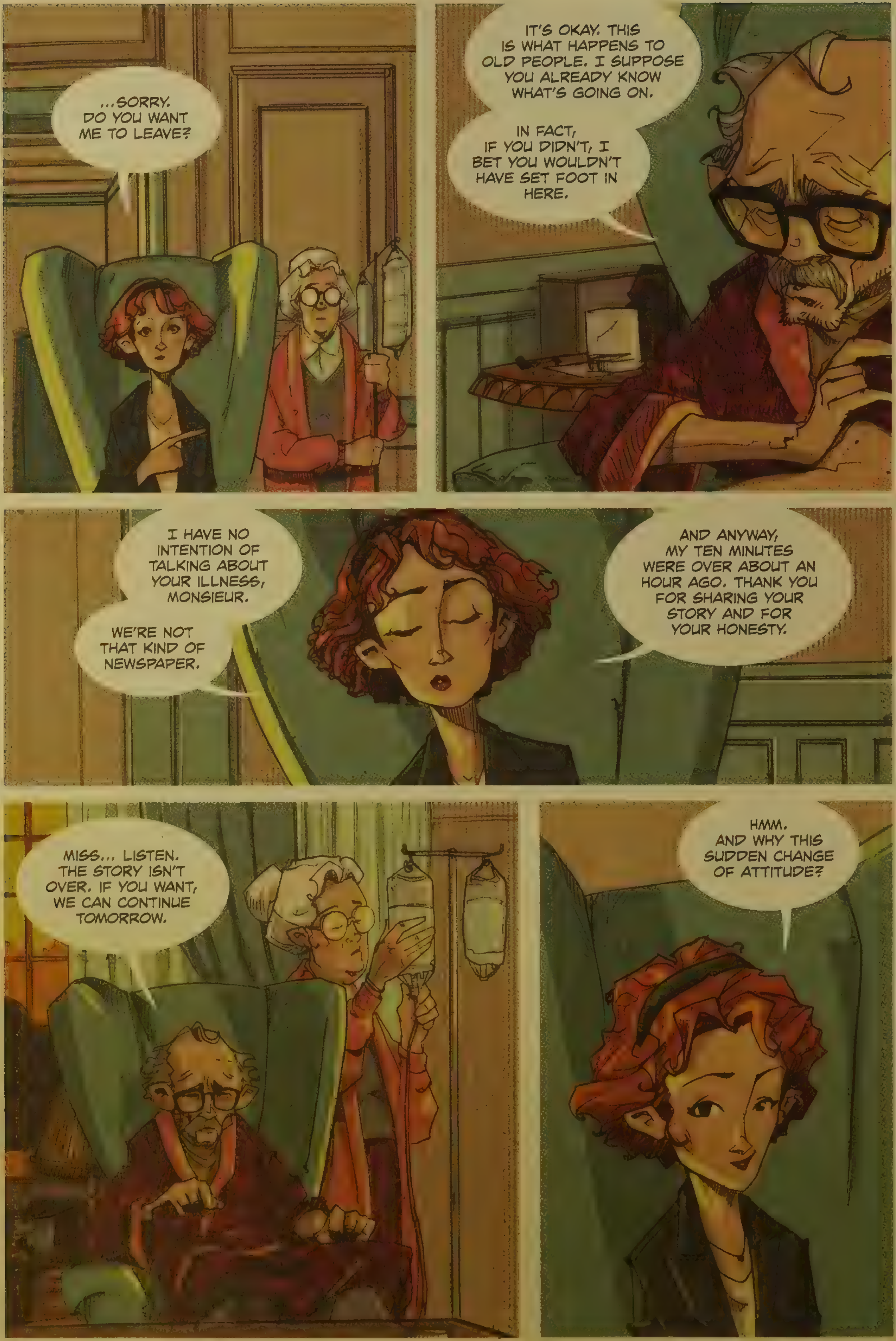

ALL OF A SUDDEN, HIS FINGERS PRESSED THE KEYS...
...AND IT ONLY TOOK A COUPLE OF NOTES...
GOOD GOD... WHO IS HE?
...FOR ALL OF US TO REALIZE THAT WE WERE IN THE PRESENCE OF A *TRUE GENIUS*.
WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT. THE DAMN BRAT...

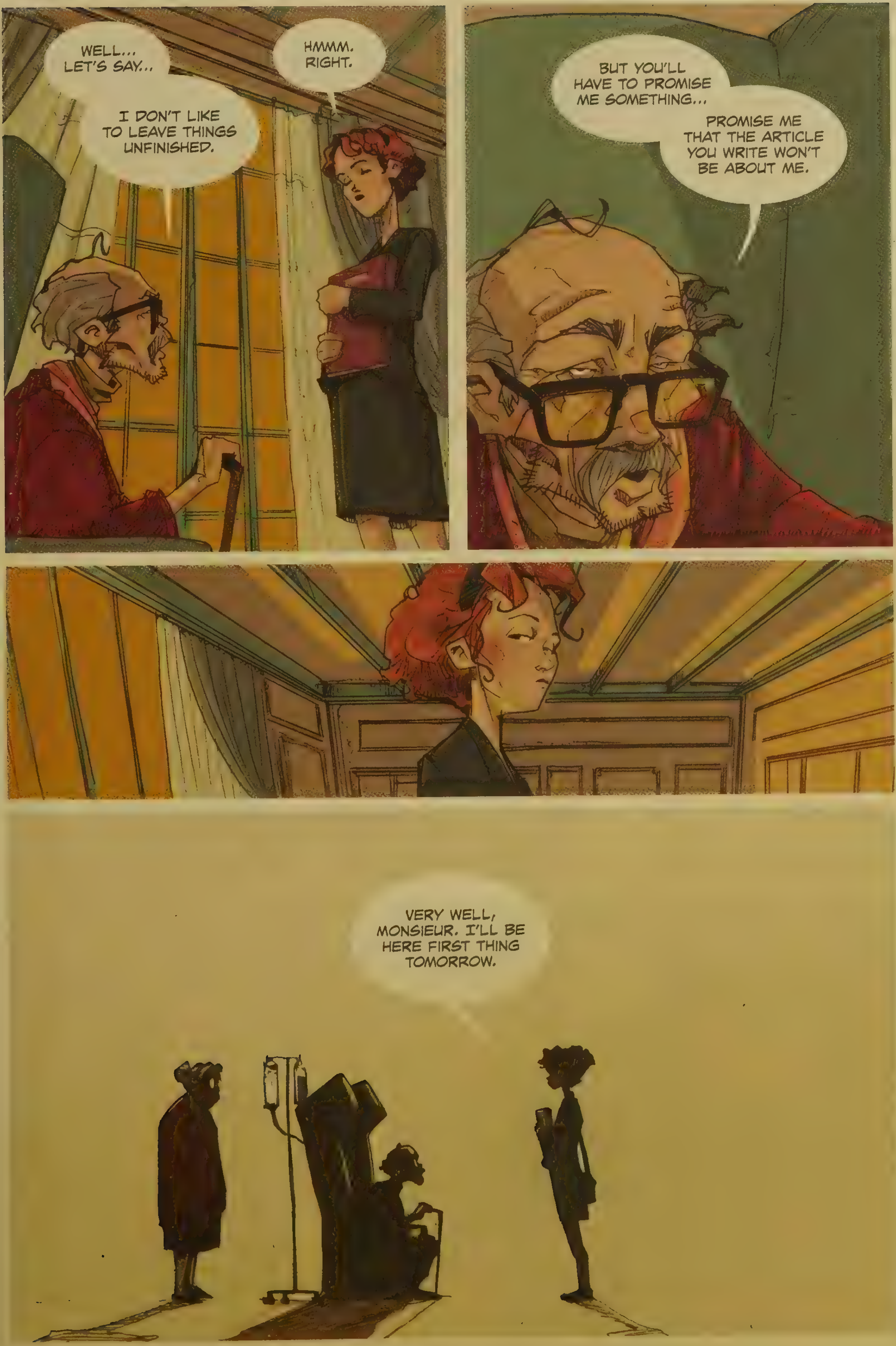

FRANÇOIS SAMSON WENT BACK ON STAGE.
ENCORE! ENCORE!
BRAVO!
FOR THE ENCORE, HE PLAYED CHOPIN'S SECOND ÉTUDE.
...AND THEN, ANOTHER ONE...
...AND ANOTHER ONE, AND ANOTHER ONE, AND ANOTHER ONE.
A TEN-YEAR-OLD PLAYED THE 27 CHOPIN ÉTUDES FROM MEMORY. NOT ONE SINGLE MISTAKE.

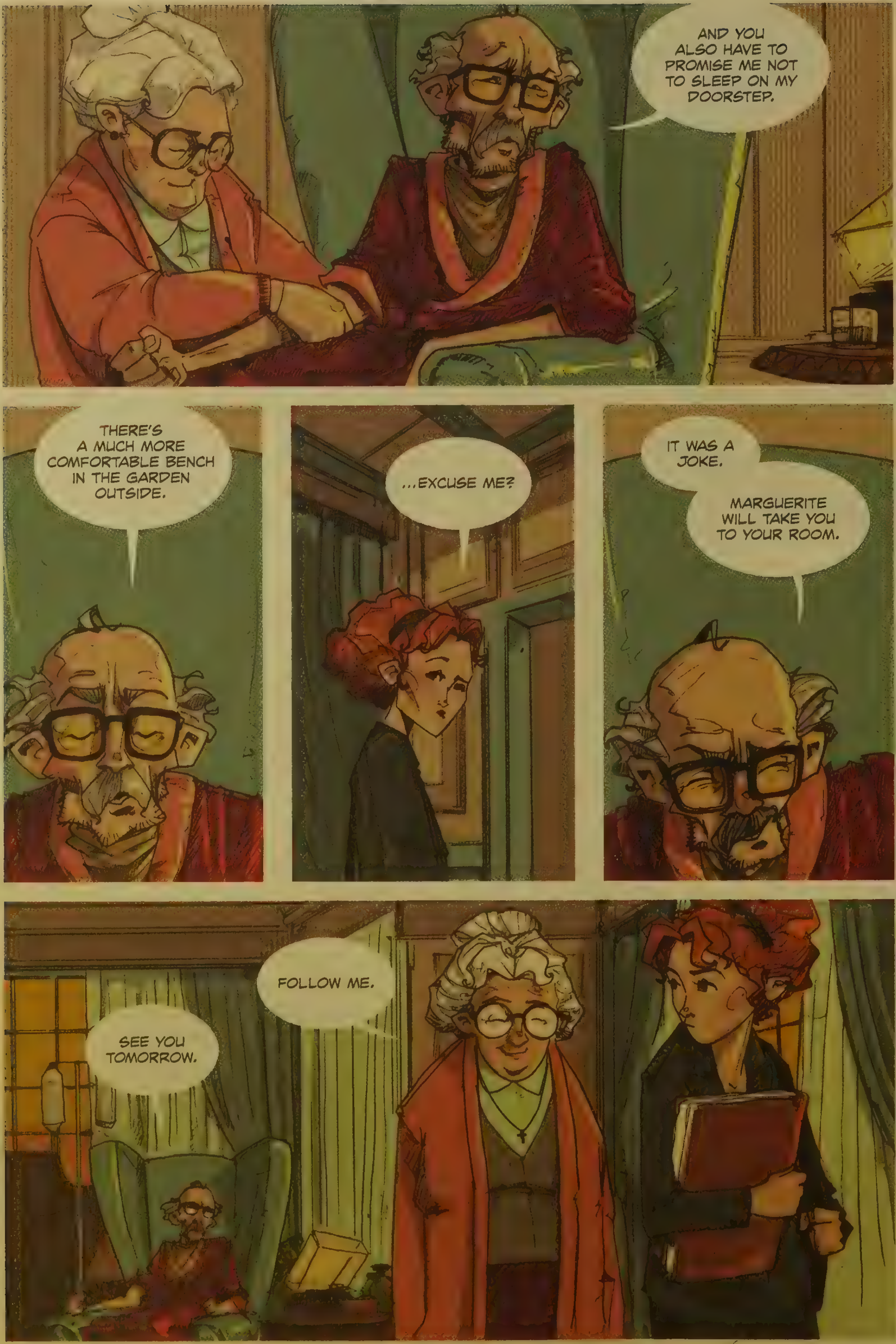

WHEN HE GOT OFF THE STAGE, HE SAW ME AND CAME TO GREET ME, BUT AS I WAS ABOUT TO SHAKE HIS HAND...
...WE WERE INTERRUPTED.
SAY *CHEESE!*

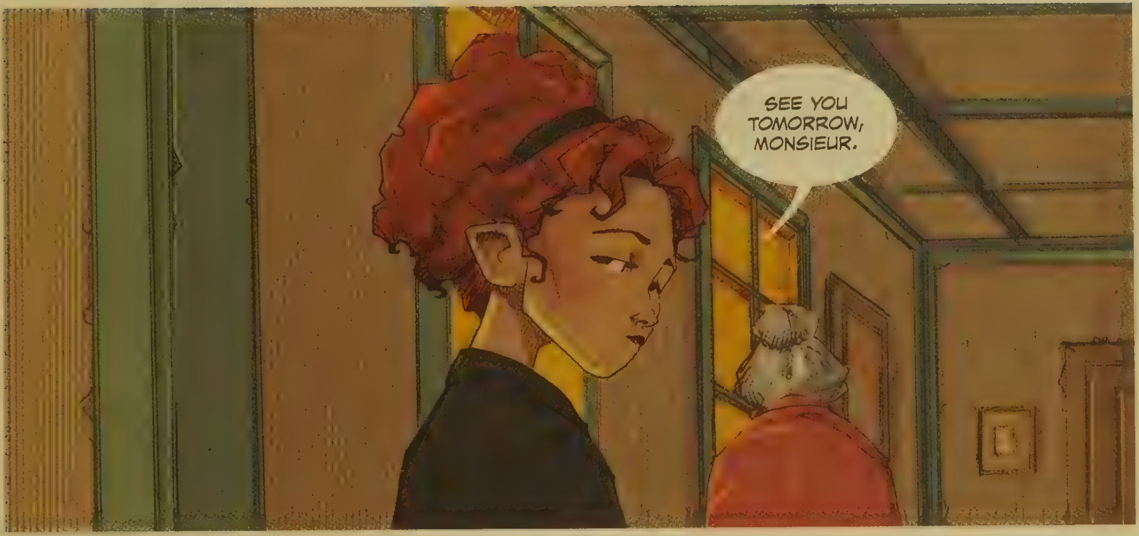

TO THIS DAY, WHEN I LOOK AT THIS PHOTOGRAPH, I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND...
...HOW I MANAGED TO TURN SO MUCH ANGER INTO SUCH A SWEET SMILE.
OVER AN HOUR OF ENCORE. TOTALLY UNHEARD OF.
NOBODY MOVED AN INCH. DOESN'T EVEN SOUND REAL, DOES IT?
NO, IT DOESN'T. SPECIALLY BECAUSE I READ THAT FRANÇOIS SAMSON CAME IN SECOND PLACE IN THAT COMPETITION.
YOU BEAT HIM. I'D LIKE TO UNDERSTAND HOW.

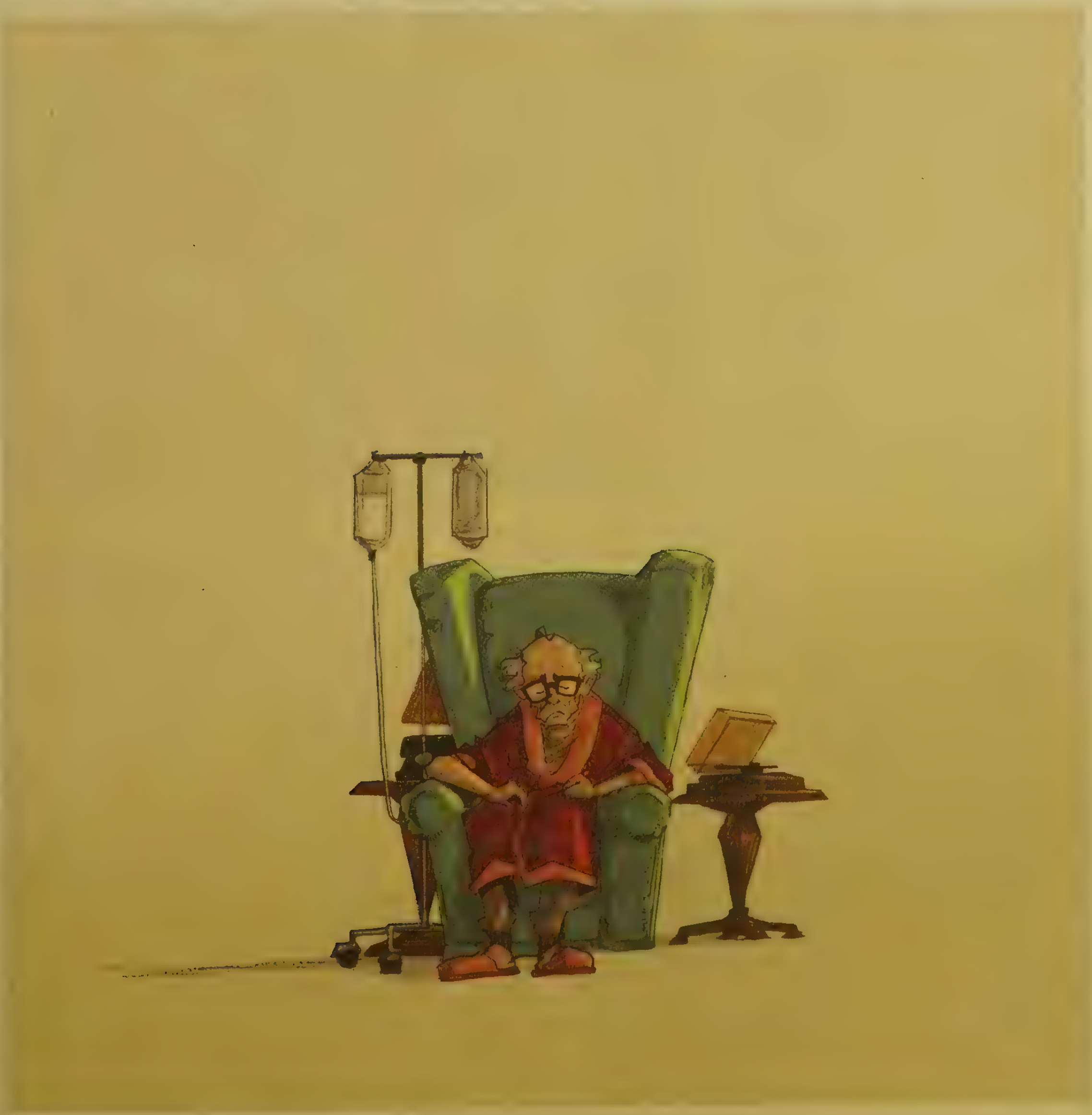

AT THE TIME, I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND EITHER.
MY MOTHER BRIBED THEM ALL. THE JURY, THE HOST, EVEN THE FEW CRITICS THAT SHOWED UP.
MORAL OF THE STORY – DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU READ. HE WAS THE REAL WINNER.
AS SIMPLE AS THAT.
MONSIEUR...
IT'S TIME FOR YOUR MEDICATION.

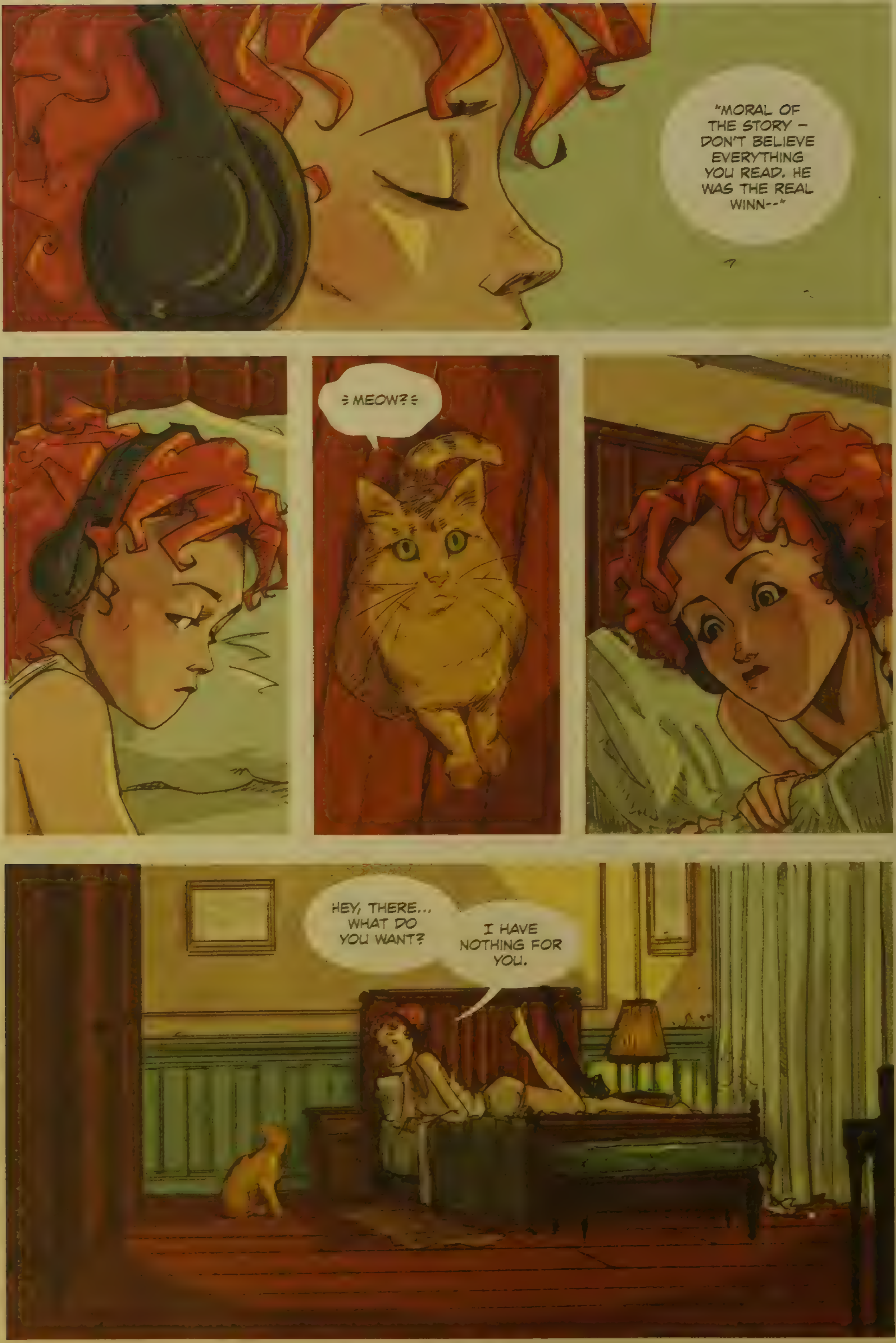

...SORRY. DO YOU WANT ME TO LEAVE?
IT'S OKAY. THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS TO OLD PEOPLE. I SUPPOSE YOU ALREADY KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON.
IN FACT, IF YOU DIDN'T, I BET YOU WOULDN'T HAVE SET FOOT IN HERE.
I HAVE NO INTENTION OF TALKING ABOUT YOUR ILLNESS, MONSIEUR.
WE'RE NOT THAT KIND OF NEWSPAPER.
AND ANYWAY, MY TEN MINUTES WERE OVER ABOUT AN HOUR AGO. THANK YOU FOR SHARING YOUR STORY AND FOR YOUR HONESTY.
MISS... LISTEN. THE STORY ISN'T OVER. IF YOU WANT, WE CAN CONTINUE TOMORROW.
HMM. AND WHY THIS SUDDEN CHANGE OF ATTITUDE?

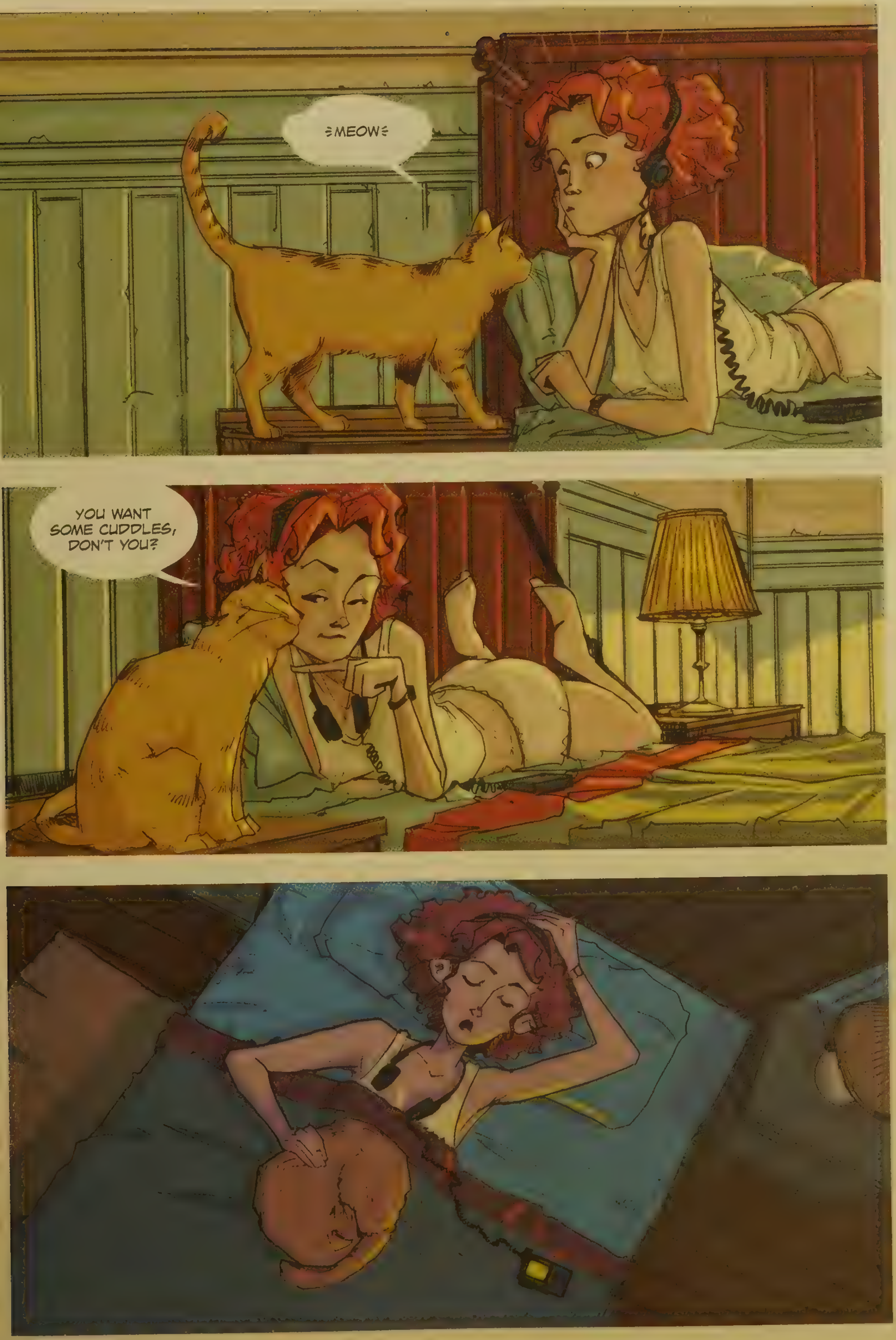

WELL... LET'S SAY...
I DON'T LIKE TO LEAVE THINGS UNFINISHED.
HMMM. RIGHT.
BUT YOU'LL HAVE TO PROMISE ME SOMETHING...
PROMISE ME THAT THE ARTICLE YOU WRITE WON'T BE ABOUT ME.
VERY WELL, MONSIEUR. I'LL BE HERE FIRST THING TOMORROW.

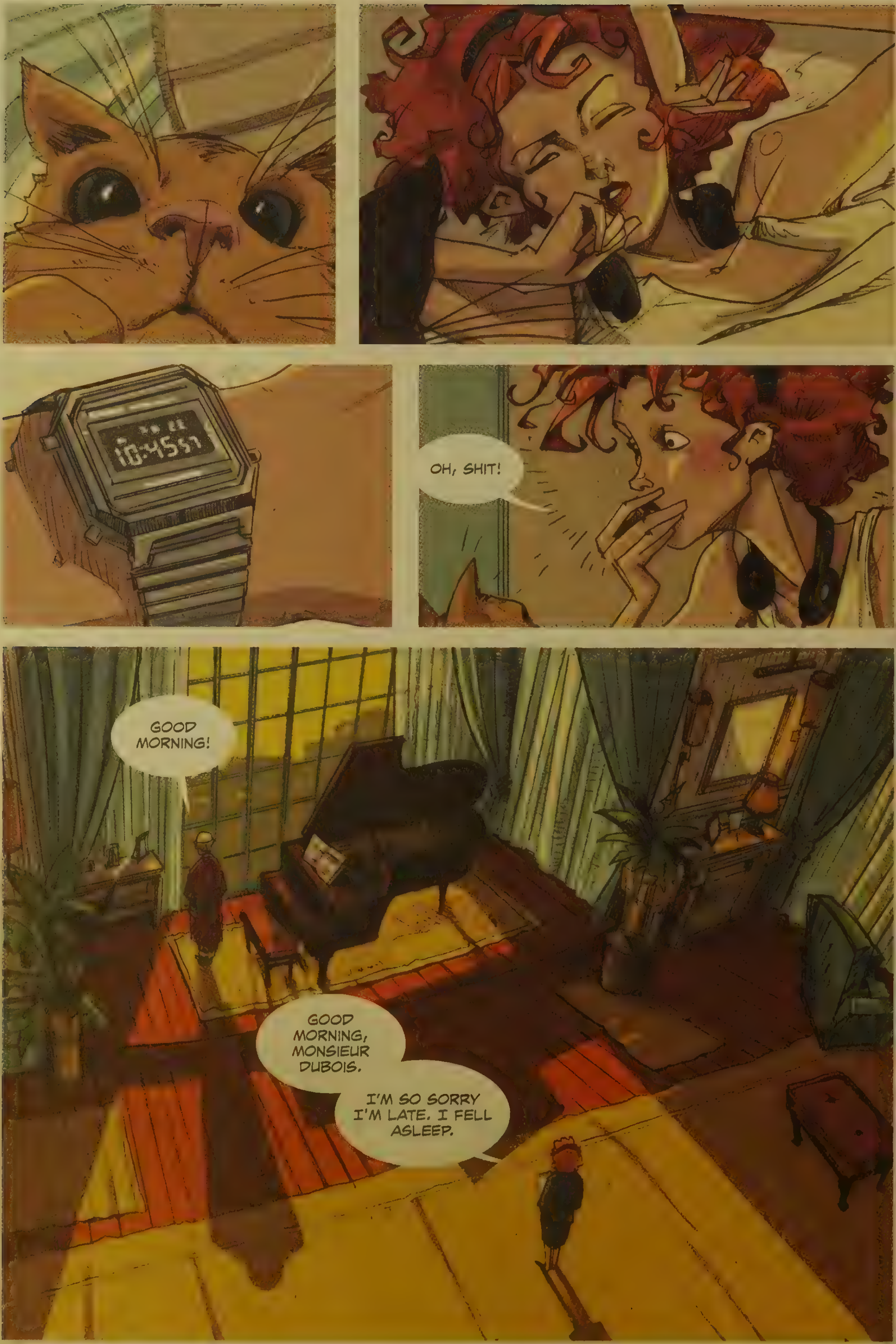

AND YOU ALSO HAVE TO PROMISE ME NOT TO SLEEP ON MY DOORSTEP.
THERE'S A MUCH MORE COMFORTABLE BENCH IN THE GARDEN OUTSIDE.
...EXCUSE ME?
IT WAS A JOKE.
MARGUERITE WILL TAKE YOU TO YOUR ROOM.
FOLLOW ME.
SEE YOU TOMORROW.

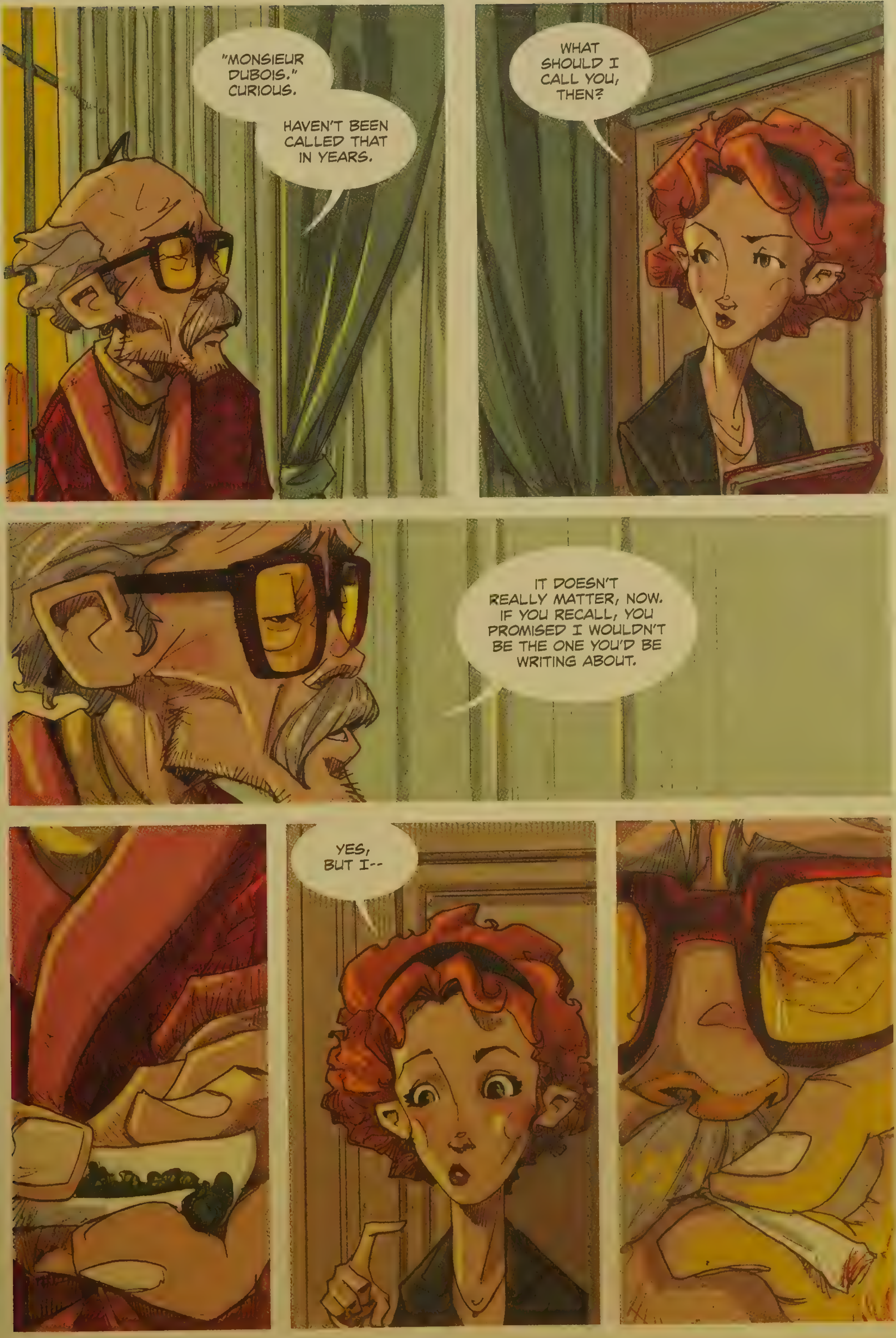

SEE YOU TOMORROW, MONSIEUR.

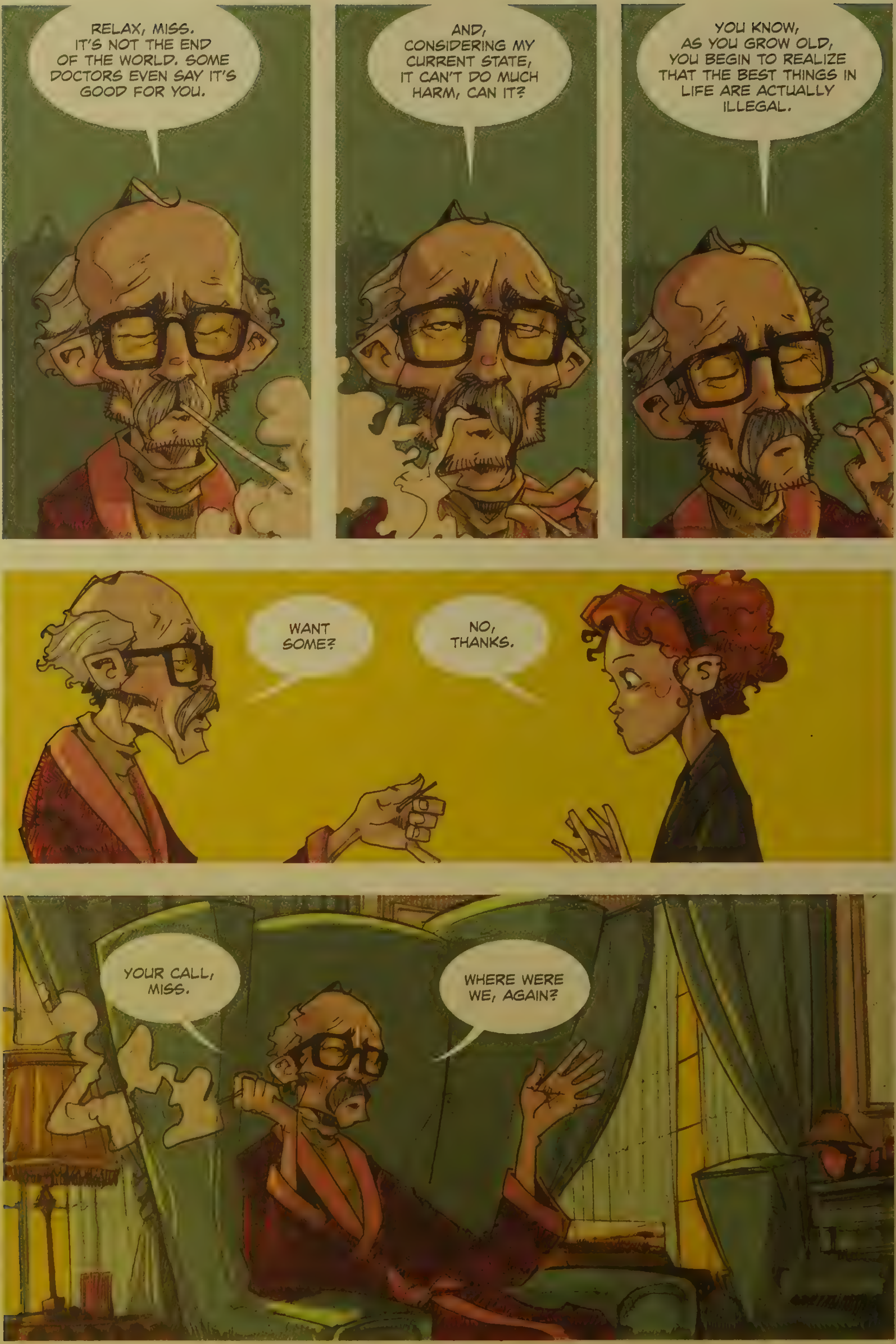


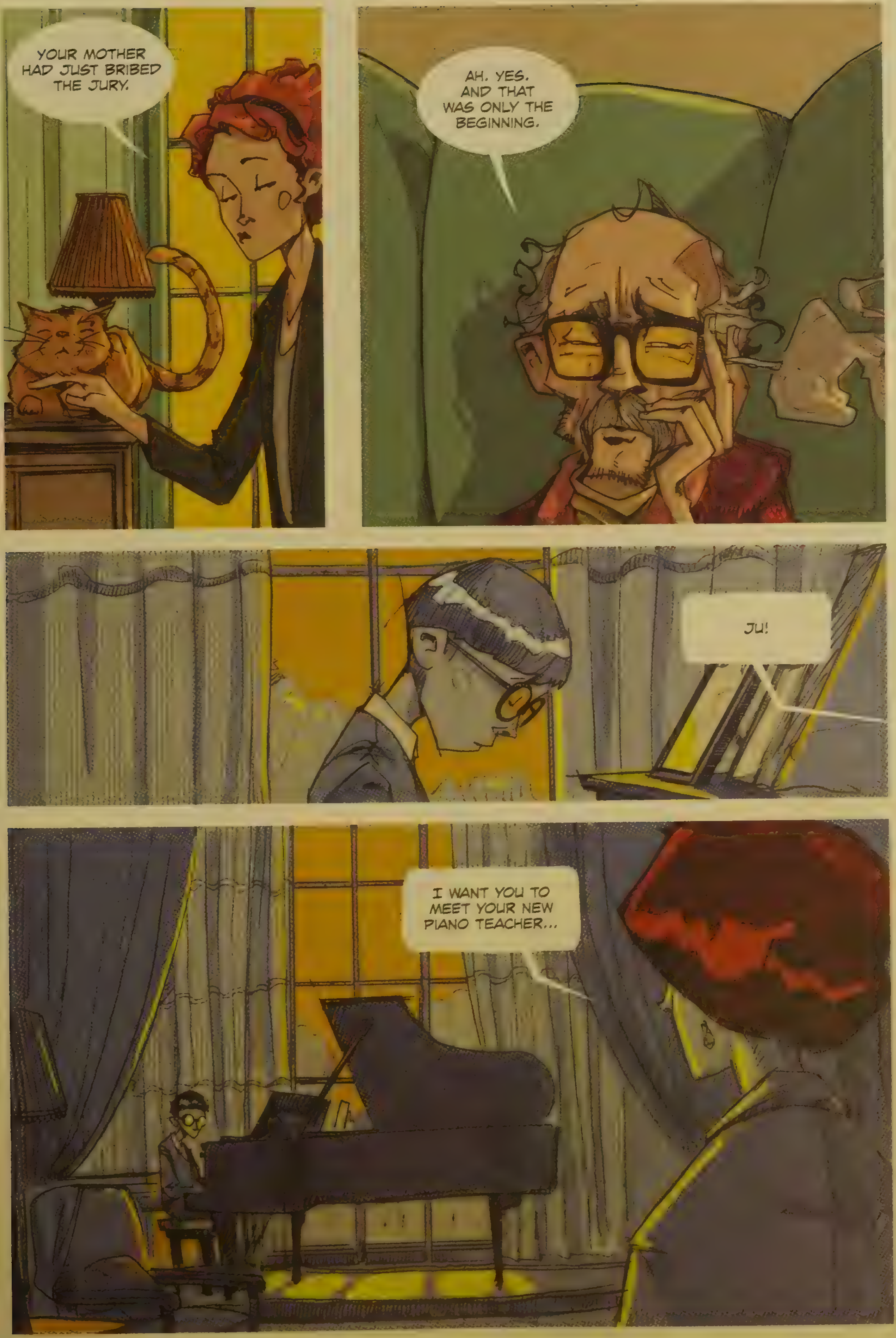

"MORAL OF THE STORY – DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU READ. HE WAS THE REAL WINN--"
MEOW?
HEY, THERE... WHAT DO YOU WANT?
I HAVE NOTHING FOR YOU.

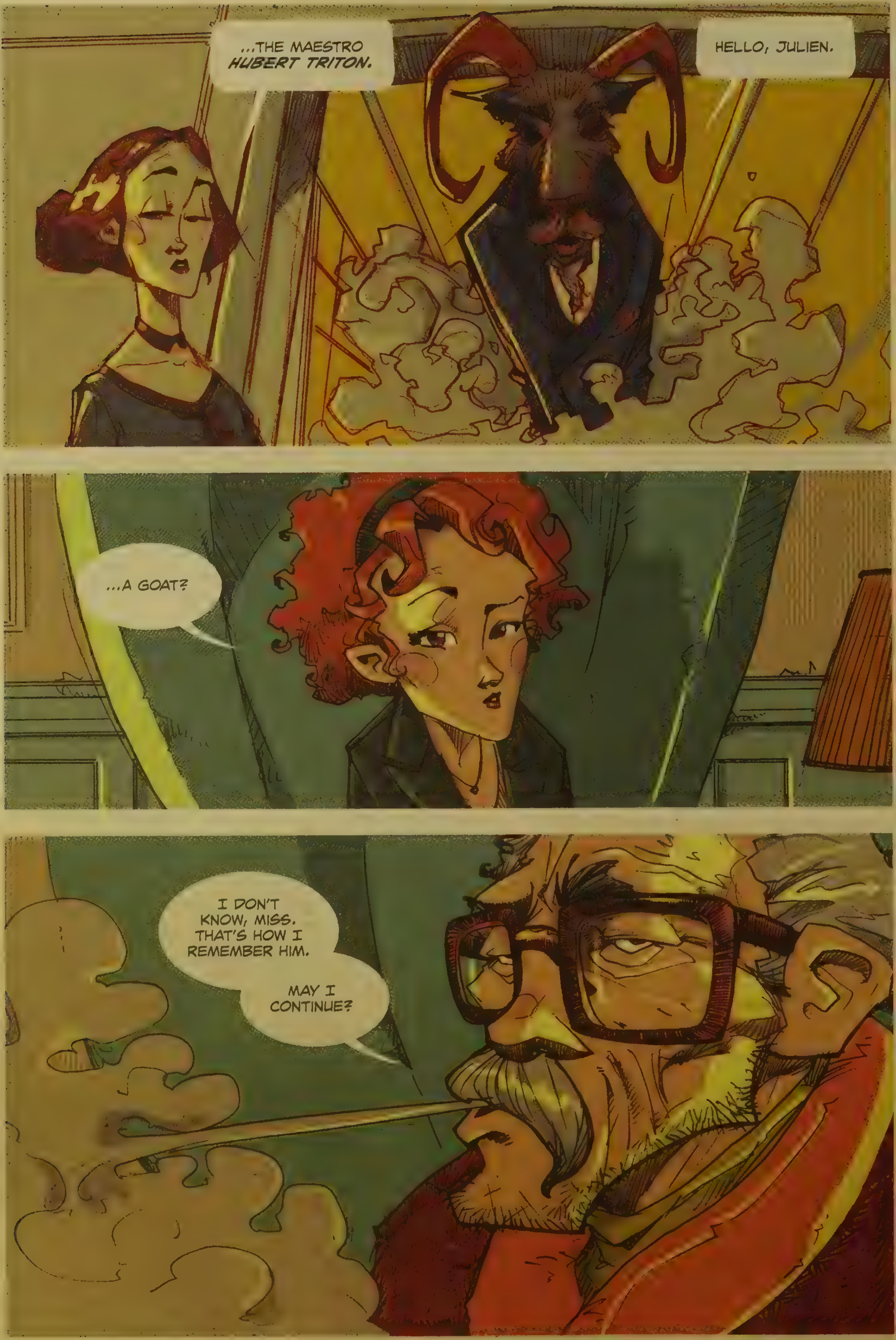

MEOW
YOU WANT SOME CUDDLES, DON'T YOU?

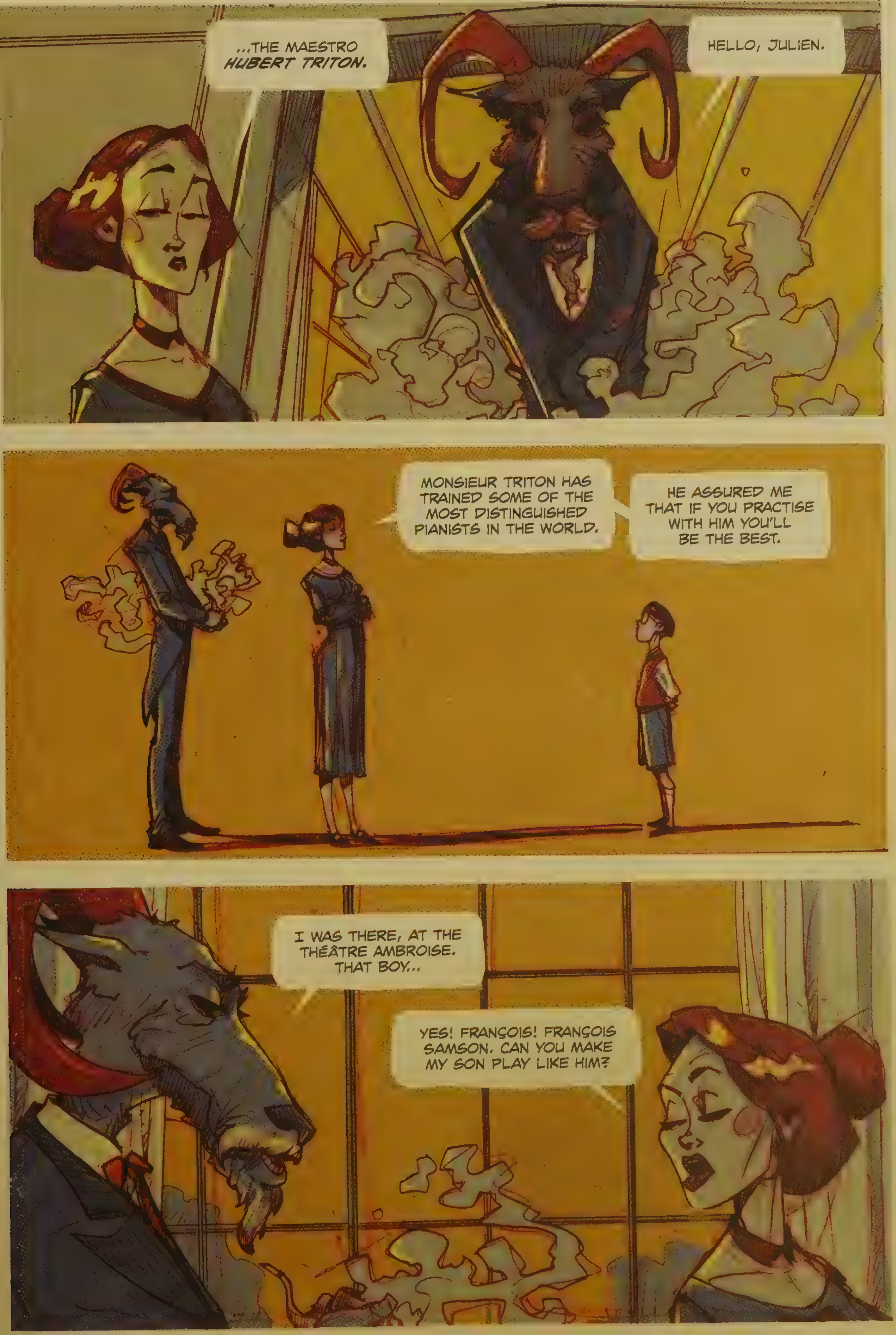

OH, SHIT!
GOOD MORNING!
GOOD MORNING, MONSIEUR DUBOIS.
I'M SO SORRY I'M LATE. I FELL ASLEEP.

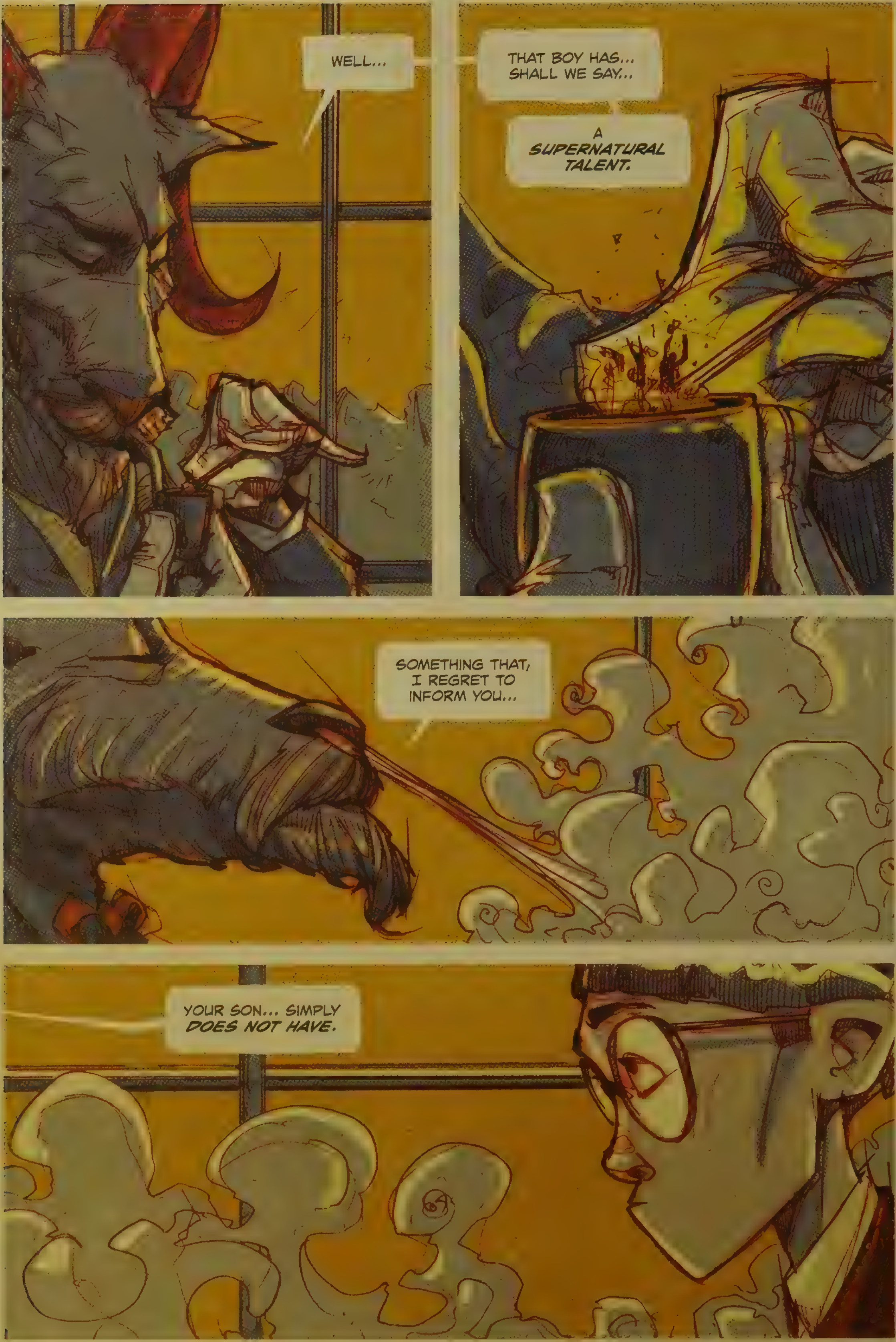

"MONSIEUR DUBOIS." CURIOUS.
HAVEN'T BEEN CALLED THAT IN YEARS.
WHAT SHOULD I CALL YOU, THEN?
IT DOESN'T REALLY MATTER, NOW. IF YOU RECALL, YOU PROMISED I WOULDN'T BE THE ONE YOU'D BE WRITING ABOUT.
YES, BUT I--

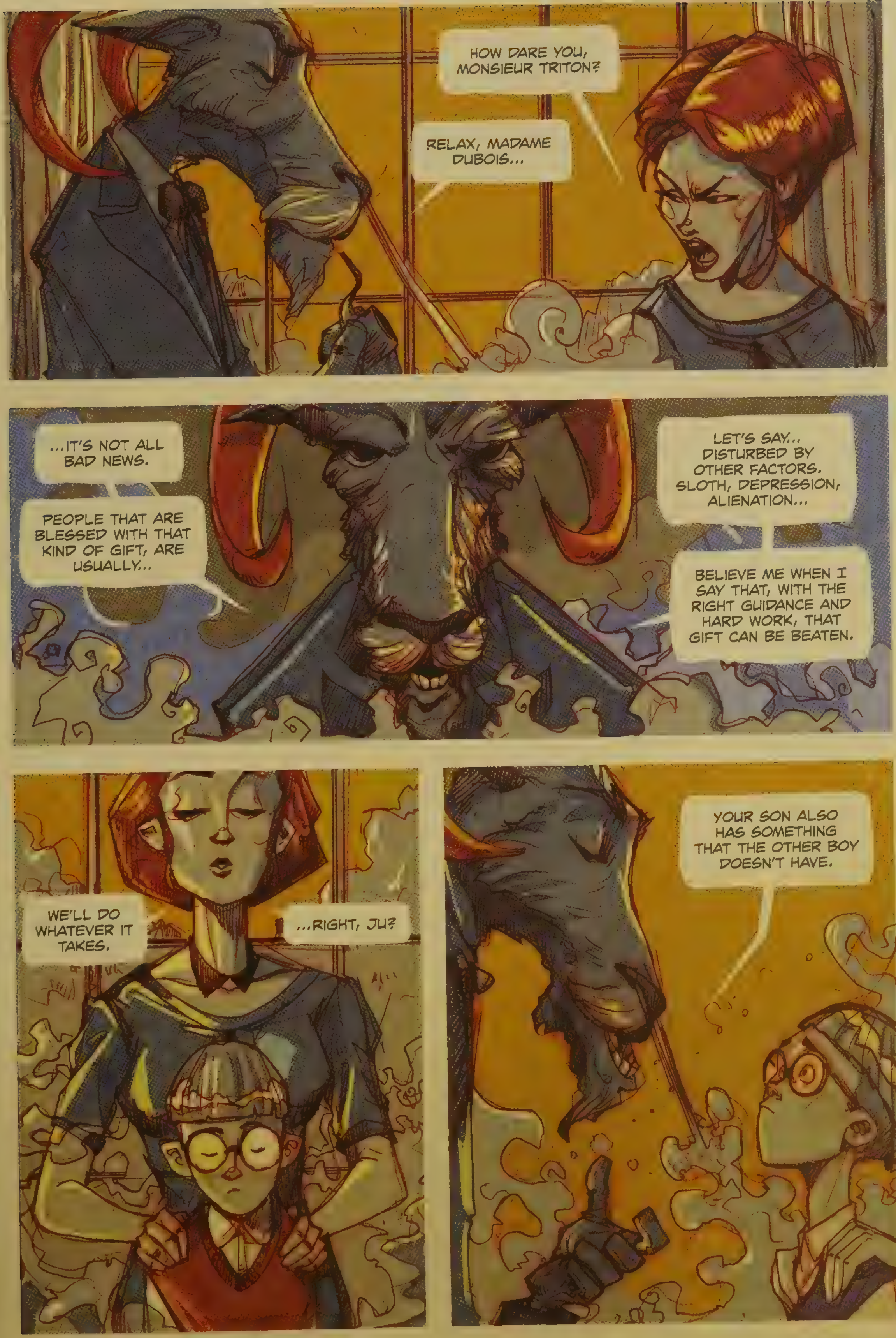

RELAX, MISS. IT'S NOT THE END OF THE WORLD. SOME DOCTORS EVEN SAY IT'S GOOD FOR YOU.
AND, CONSIDERING MY CURRENT STATE, IT CAN'T DO MUCH HARM, CAN IT?
YOU KNOW, AS YOU GROW OLD, YOU BEGIN TO REALIZE THAT THE BEST THINGS IN LIFE ARE ACTUALLY ILLEGAL.
WANT SOME?
NO, THANKS.
YOUR CALL, MISS.
WHERE WERE WE, AGAIN?

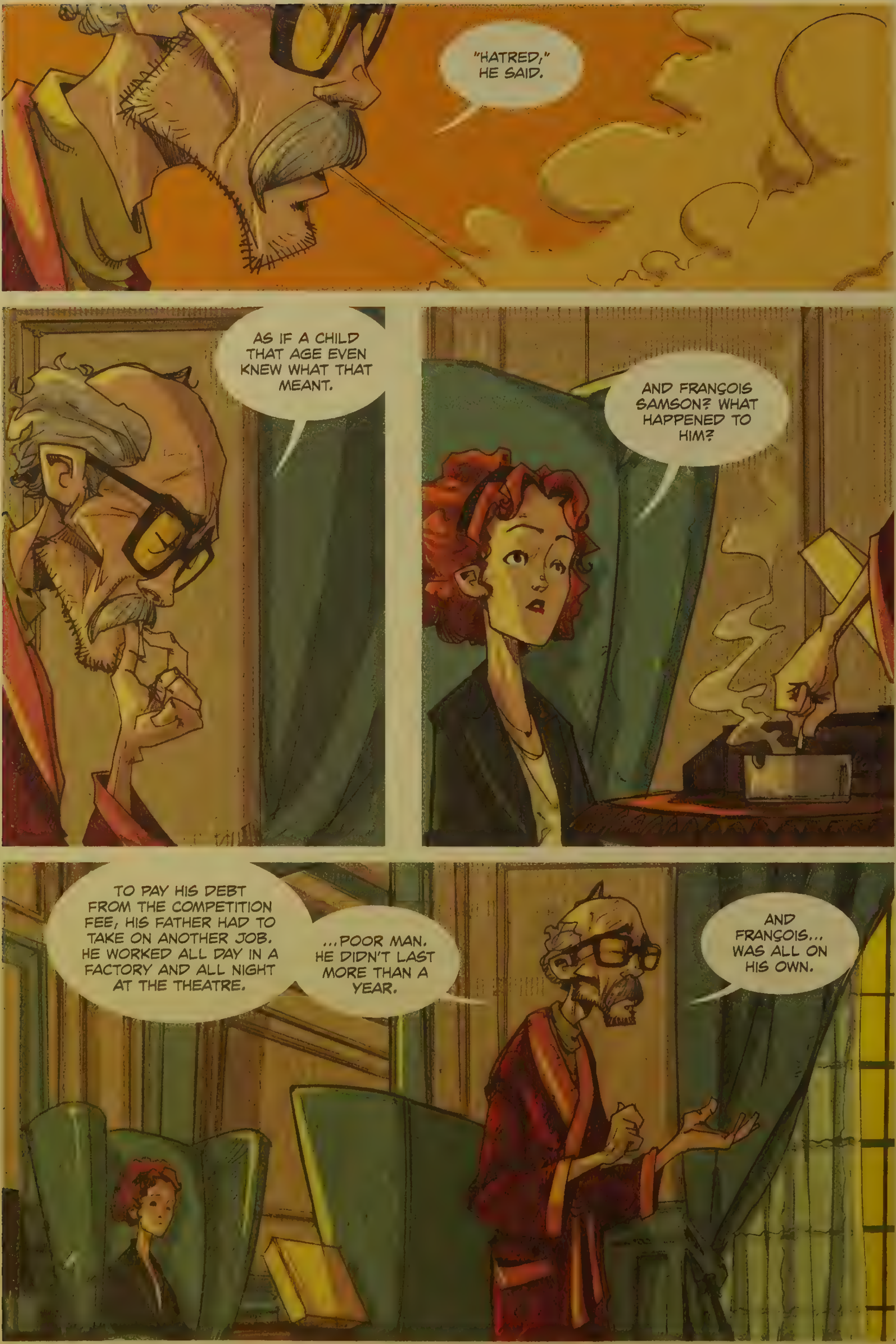

YOUR MOTHER HAD JUST BRIBED THE JURY.
AH. YES. AND THAT WAS ONLY THE BEGINNING.
JU!
I WANT YOU TO MEET YOUR NEW PIANO TEACHER...

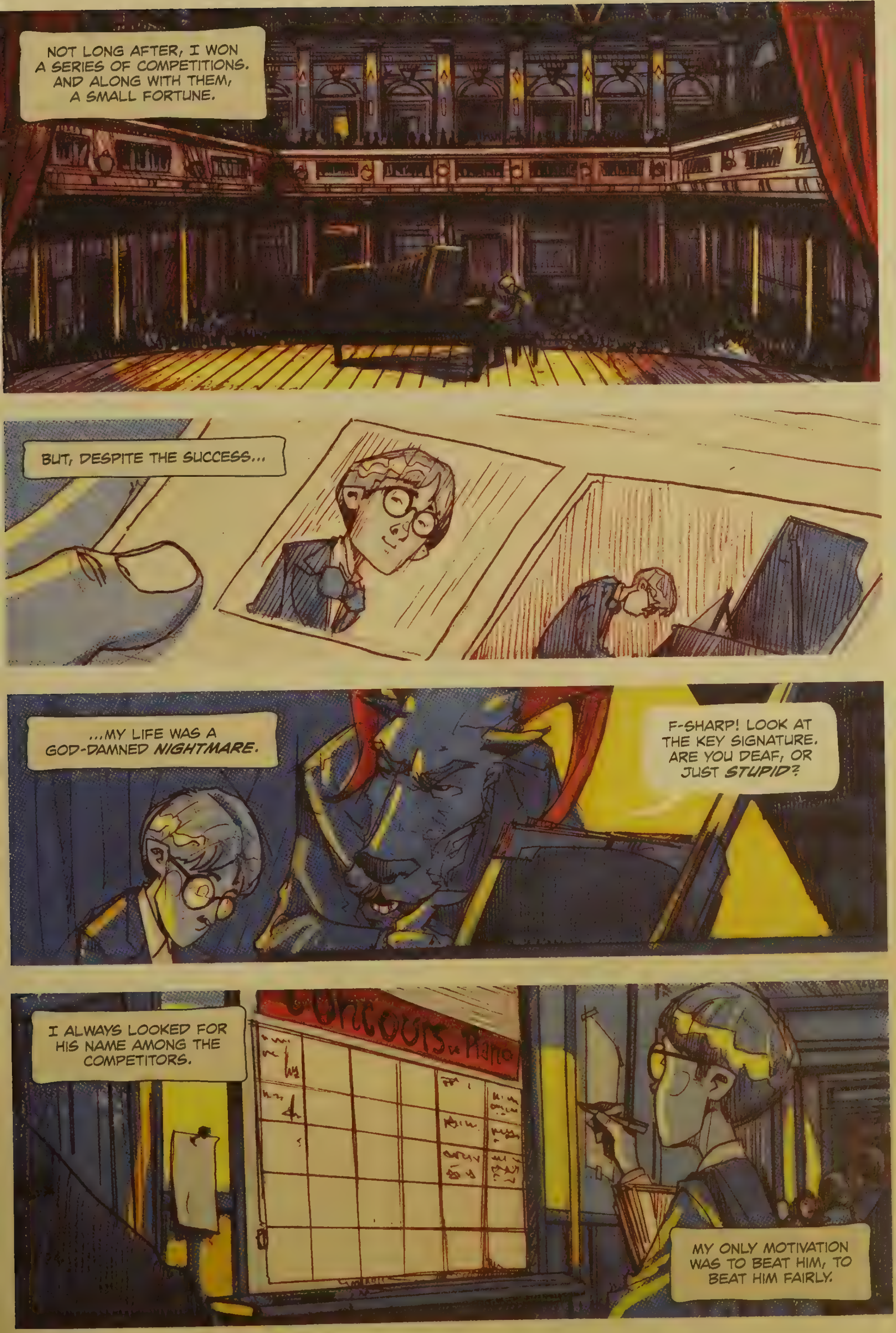

...THE MAESTRO *HUBERT TRITON.*
HELLO, JULIEN.
...A GOAT?
I DON'T KNOW, MISS. THAT'S HOW I REMEMBER HIM.
MAY I CONTINUE?

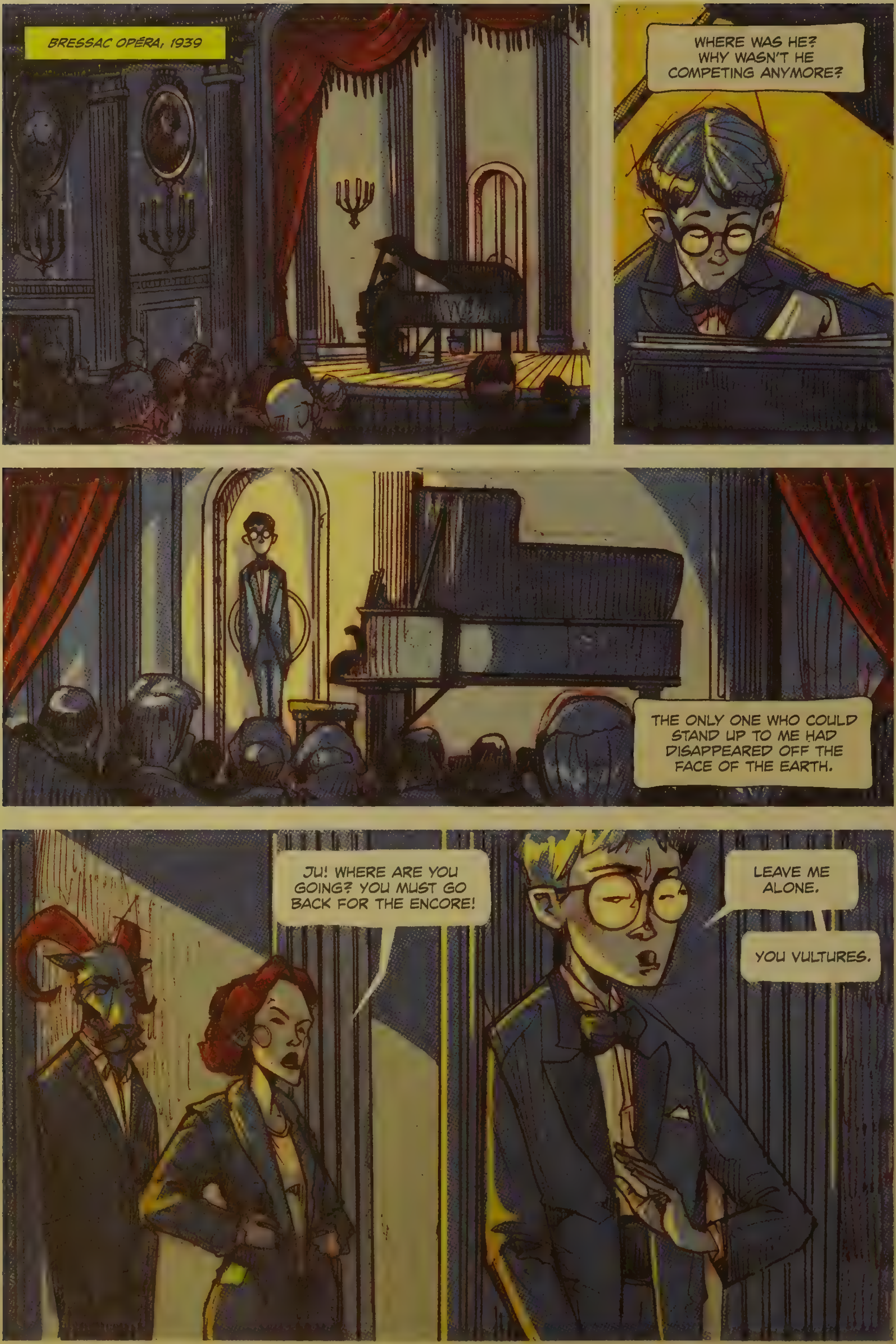

...THE MAESTRO *HUBERT TRITON.*
HELLO, JULIEN.
MONSIEUR TRITON HAS TRAINED SOME OF THE MOST DISTINGUISHED PIANISTS IN THE WORLD.
HE ASSURED ME THAT IF YOU PRACTISE WITH HIM YOU'LL BE THE BEST.
I WAS THERE, AT THE THÉÂTRE AMBROISE. THAT BOY...
YES! FRANÇOIS! FRANÇOIS SAMSON. CAN YOU MAKE MY SON PLAY LIKE HIM?

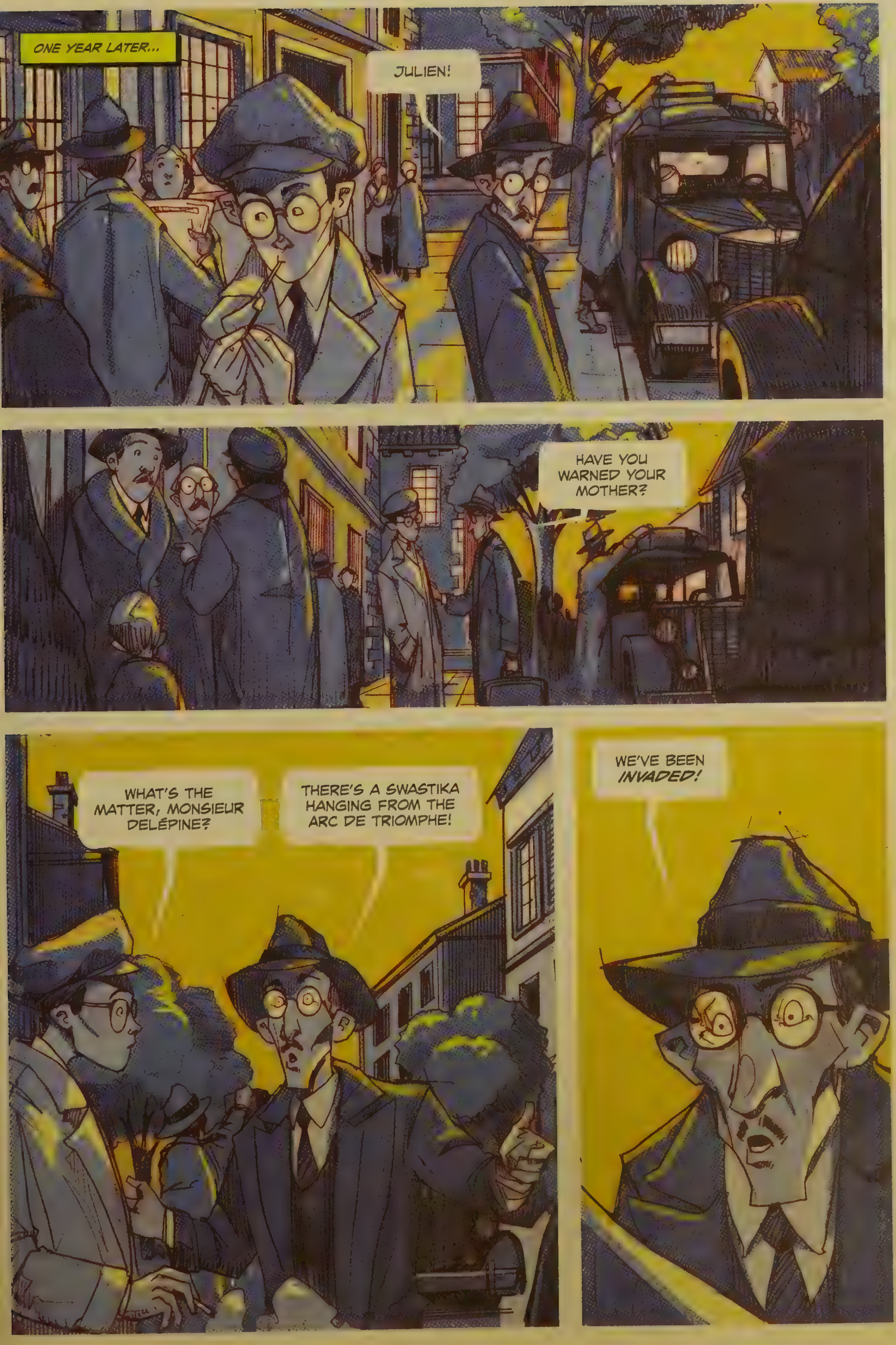

WELL...
THAT BOY HAS... SHALL WE SAY...
A *SUPERNATURAL TALENT.*
SOMETHING THAT, I REGRET TO INFORM YOU...
YOUR SON... SIMPLY *DOES NOT HAVE.*

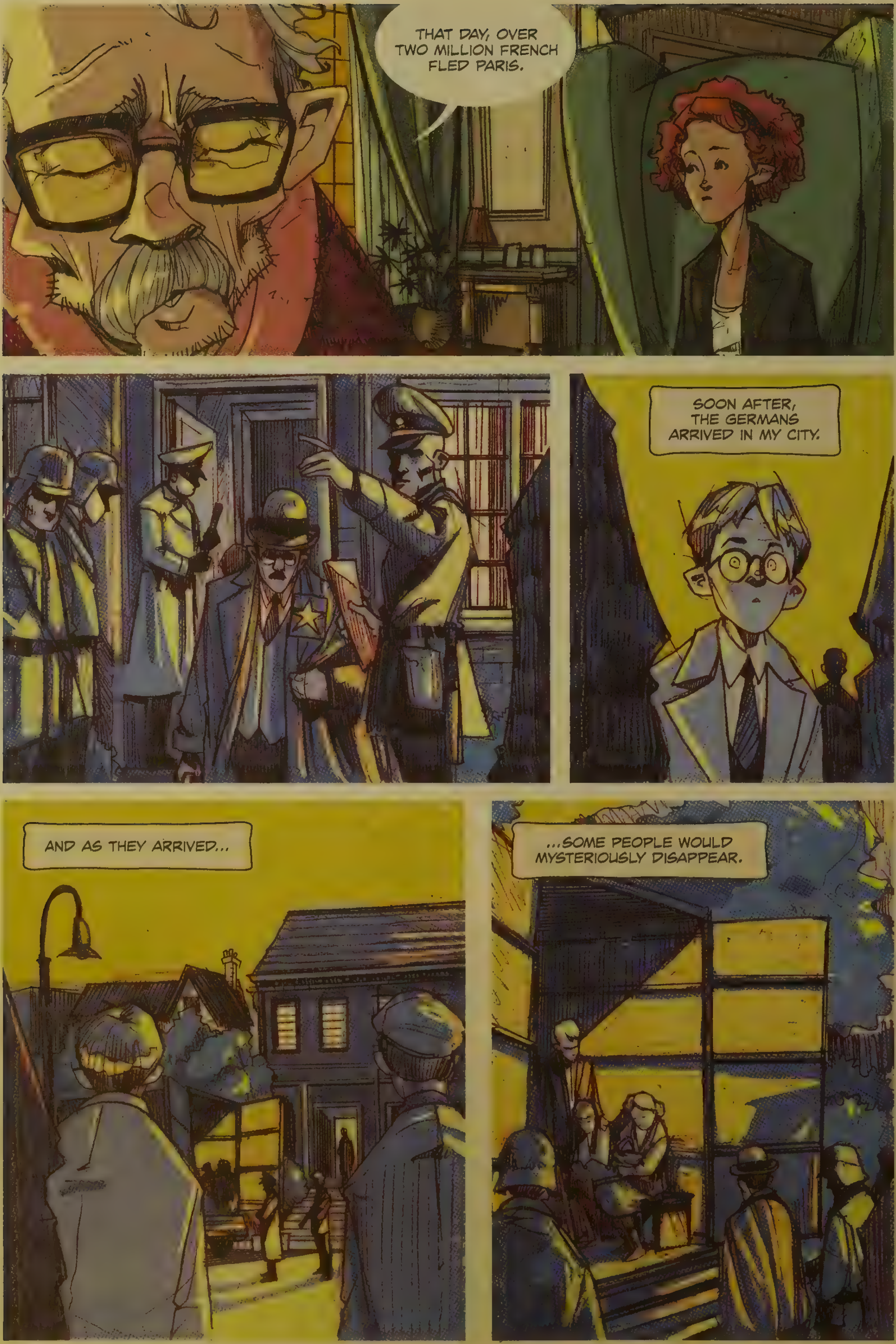

HOW DARE YOU, MONSIEUR TRITON?
RELAX, MADAME DUBOIS...
...IT'S NOT ALL BAD NEWS.
PEOPLE THAT ARE BLESSED WITH THAT KIND OF GIFT, ARE USUALLY...
LET'S SAY... DISTURBED BY OTHER FACTORS. SLOTH, DEPRESSION, ALIENATION...
BELIEVE ME WHEN I SAY THAT, WITH THE RIGHT GUIDANCE AND HARD WORK, THAT GIFT CAN BE BEATEN.
WE'LL DO WHATEVER IT TAKES.
...RIGHT, JU?
YOUR SON ALSO HAS SOMETHING THAT THE OTHER BOY DOESN'T HAVE.

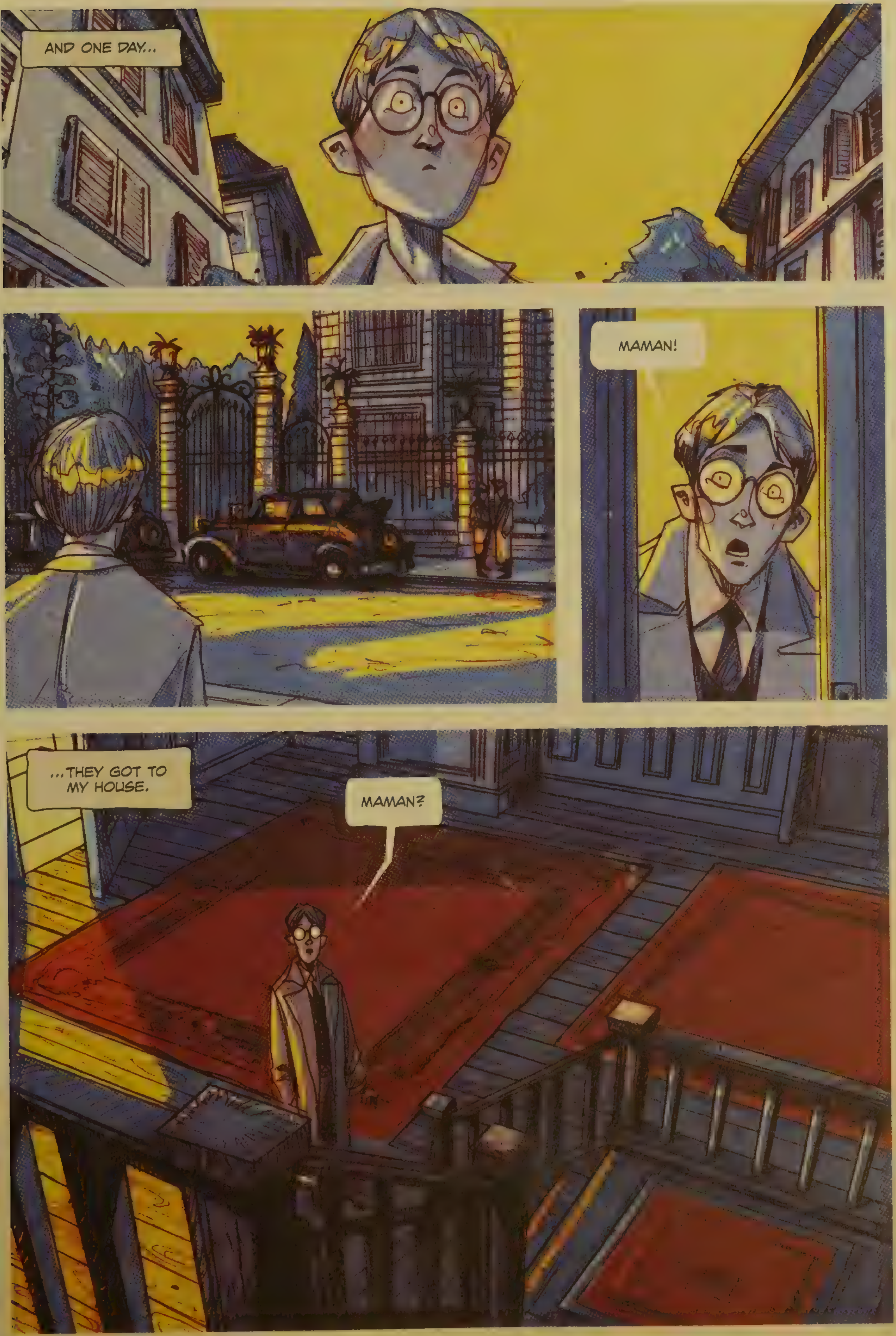

"HATRED," HE SAID.
AS IF A CHILD THAT AGE EVEN KNEW WHAT THAT MEANT.
AND FRANÇOIS SAMSON? WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM?
TO PAY HIS DEBT FROM THE COMPETITION FEE, HIS FATHER HAD TO TAKE ON ANOTHER JOB. HE WORKED ALL DAY IN A FACTORY AND ALL NIGHT AT THE THEATRE.
...POOR MAN. HE DIDN'T LAST MORE THAN A YEAR.
AND FRANÇOIS... WAS ALL ON HIS OWN.

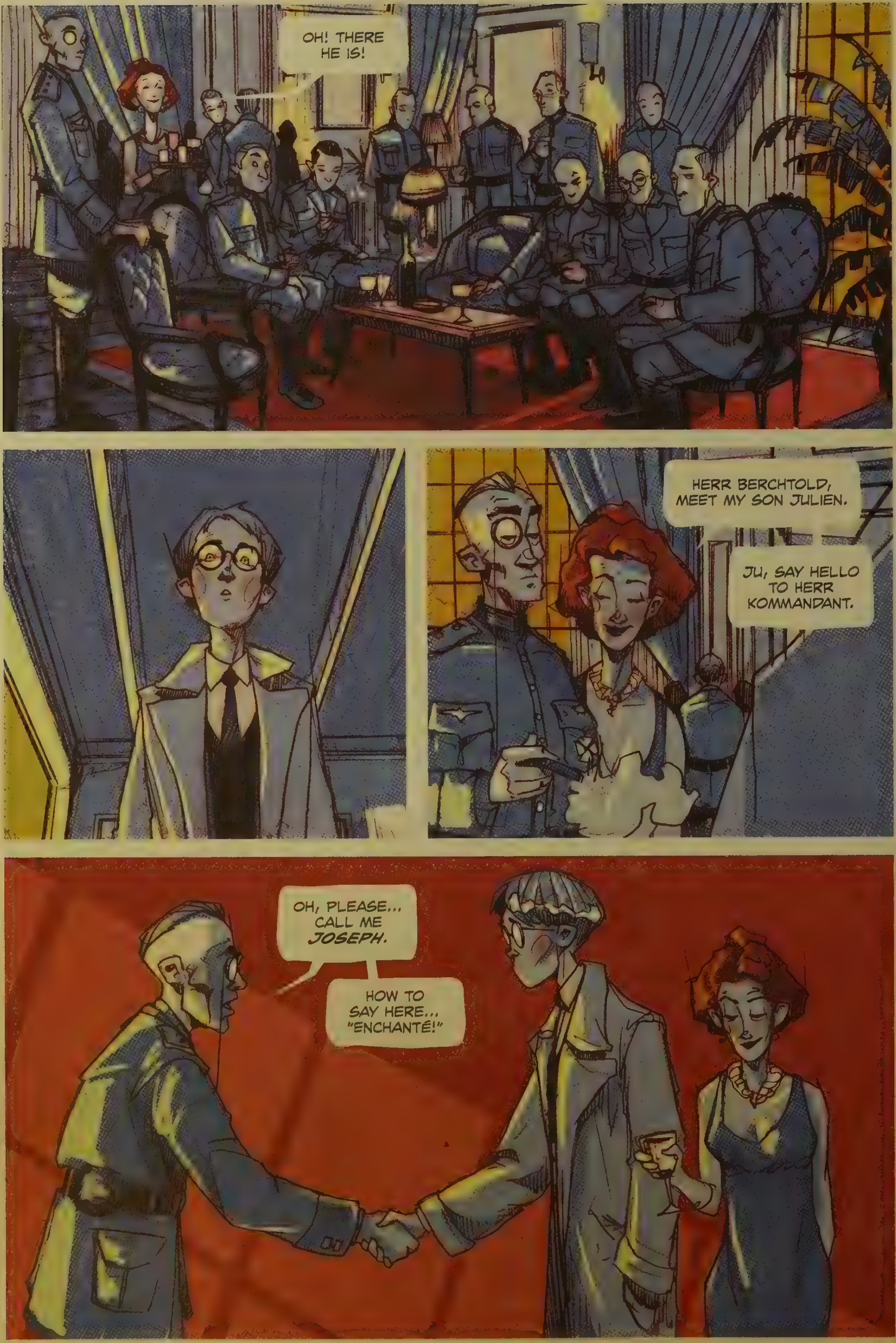

NOT LONG AFTER, I WON A SERIES OF COMPETITIONS. AND ALONG WITH THEM, A SMALL FORTUNE.
BUT, DESPITE THE SUCCESS...
...MY LIFE WAS A GOD-DAMNED *NIGHTMARE*.
F-SHARP! LOOK AT THE KEY SIGNATURE. ARE YOU DEAF, OR JUST *STUPID*?
I ALWAYS LOOKED FOR HIS NAME AMONG THE COMPETITORS.
Concours de Piano
MY ONLY MOTIVATION WAS TO BEAT HIM, TO BEAT HIM FAIRLY.

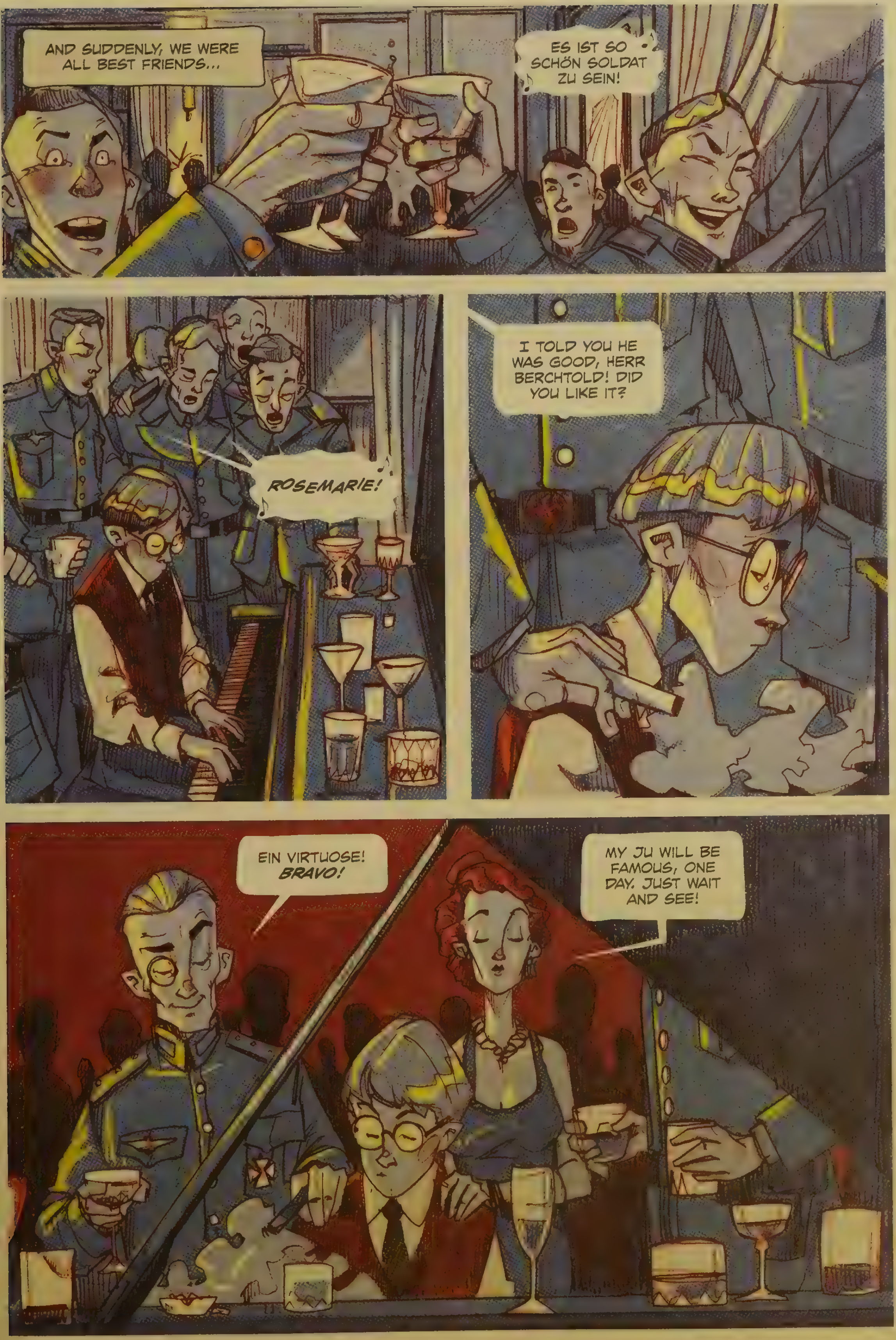

BRESSAC OPÉRA, 1939
WHERE WAS HE? WHY WASN'T HE COMPETING ANYMORE?
THE ONLY ONE WHO COULD STAND UP TO ME HAD DISAPPEARED OFF THE FACE OF THE EARTH.
JU! WHERE ARE YOU GOING? YOU MUST GO BACK FOR THE ENCORE!
LEAVE ME ALONE.
YOU VULTURES.

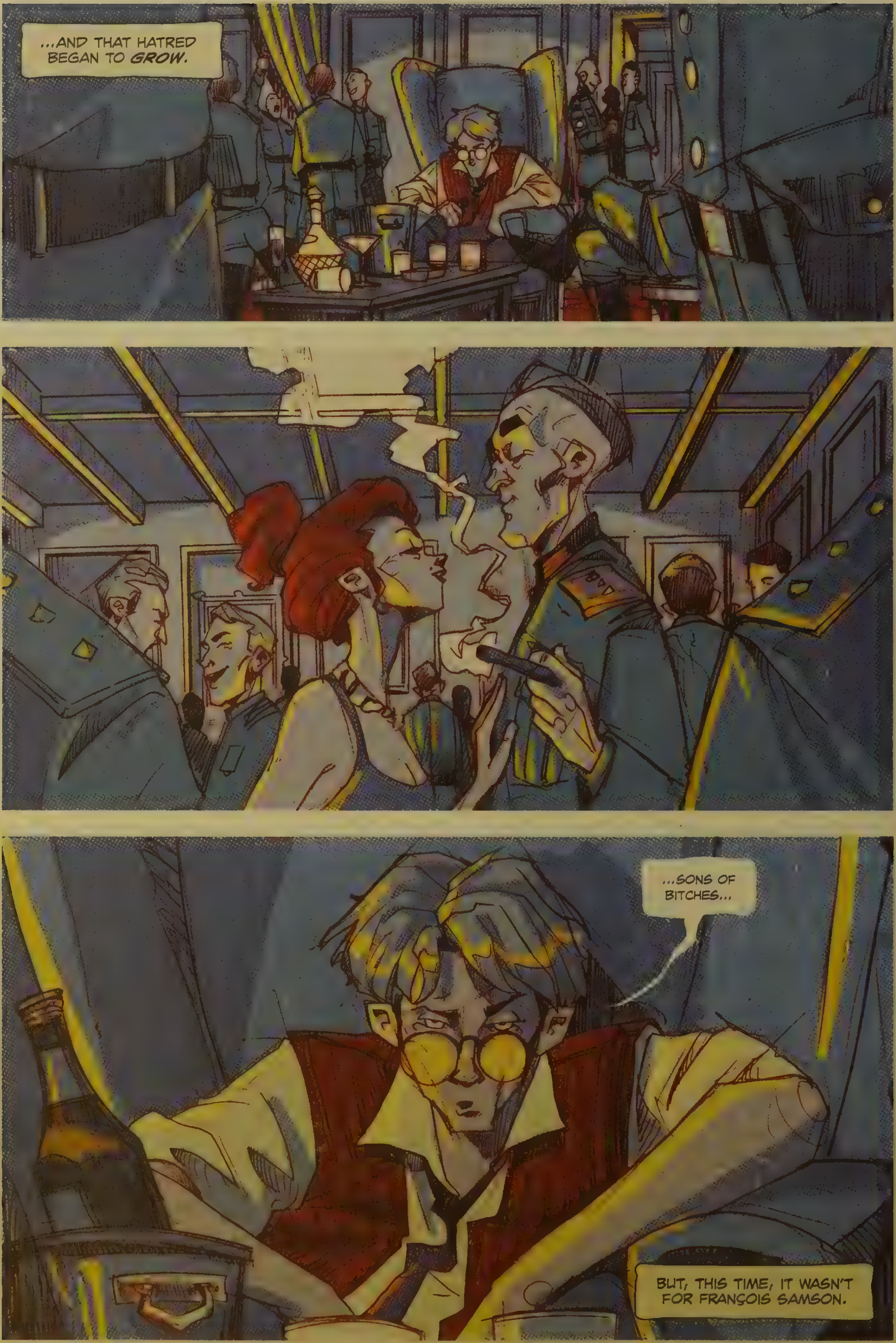

ONE YEAR LATER...
JULIEN!
HAVE YOU WARNED YOUR MOTHER?
WHAT'S THE MATTER, MONSIEUR DELÉPINE?
THERE'S A SWASTIKA HANGING FROM THE ARC DE TRIOMPHE!
WE'VE BEEN *INVADED!*

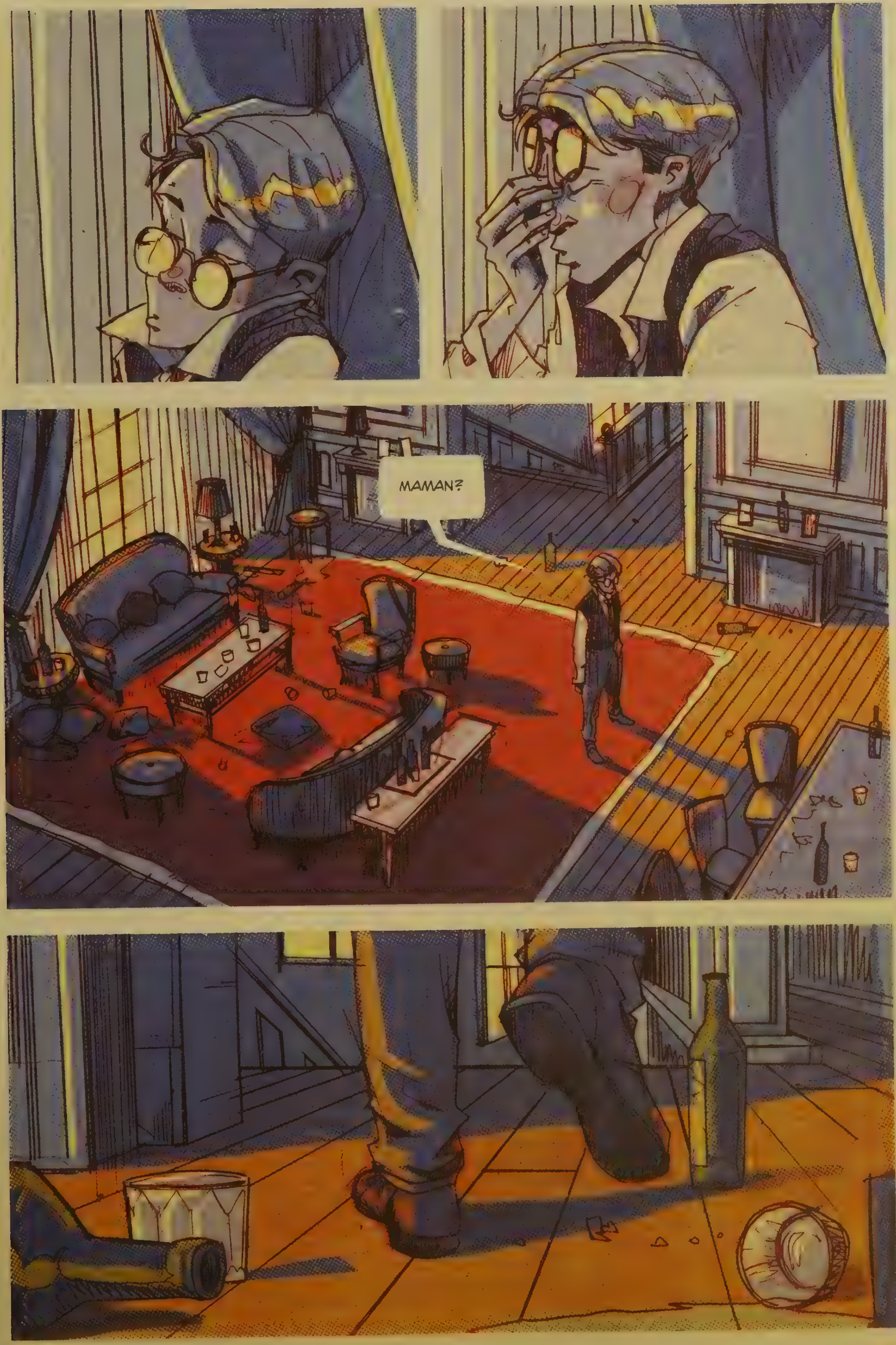

THAT DAY, OVER TWO MILLION FRENCH FLED PARIS.
SOON AFTER, THE GERMANS ARRIVED IN MY CITY.
AND AS THEY ARRIVED...
...SOME PEOPLE WOULD MYSTERIOUSLY DISAPPEAR.

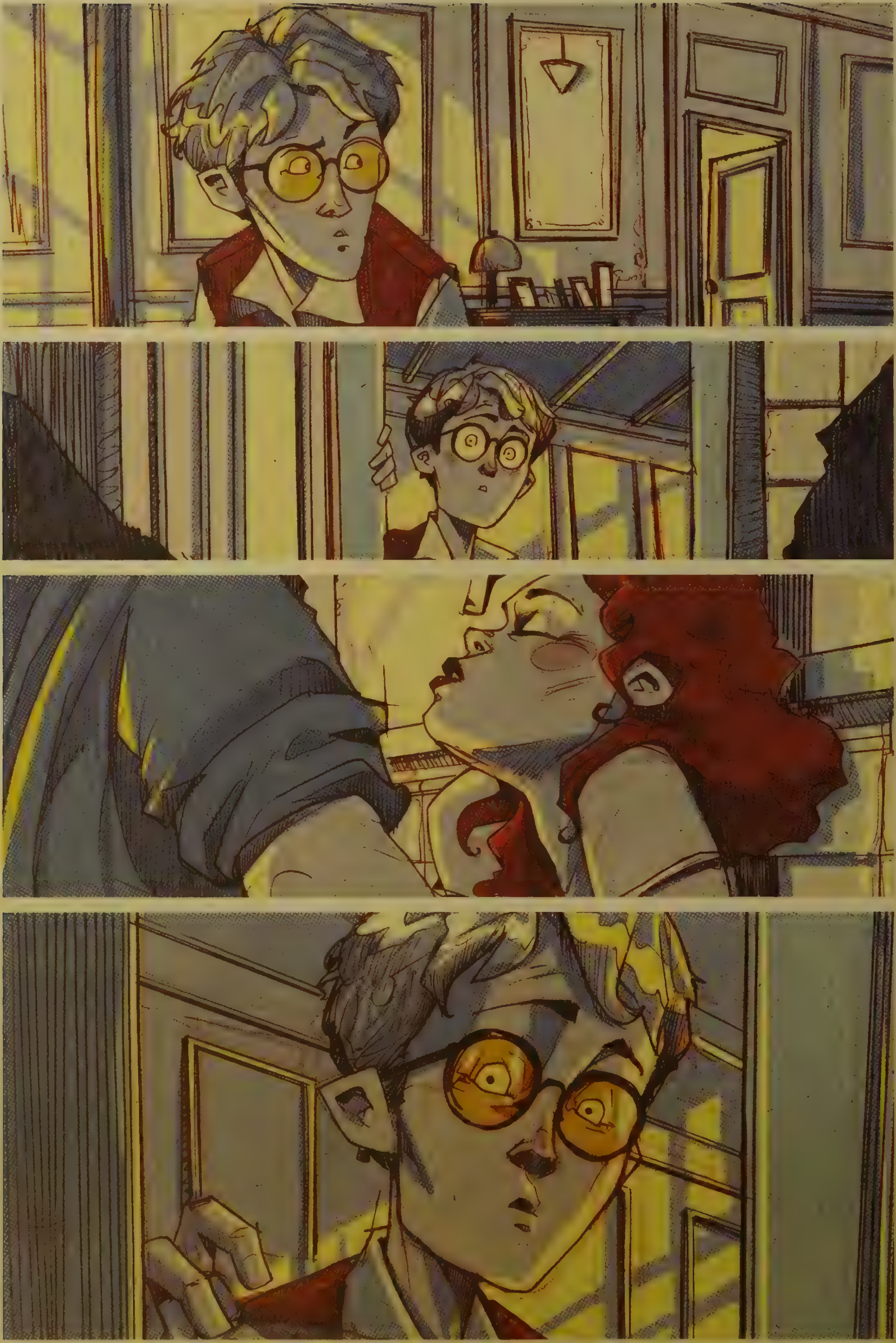

AND ONE DAY...
MAMAN!
...THEY GOT TO MY HOUSE.
MAMAN?

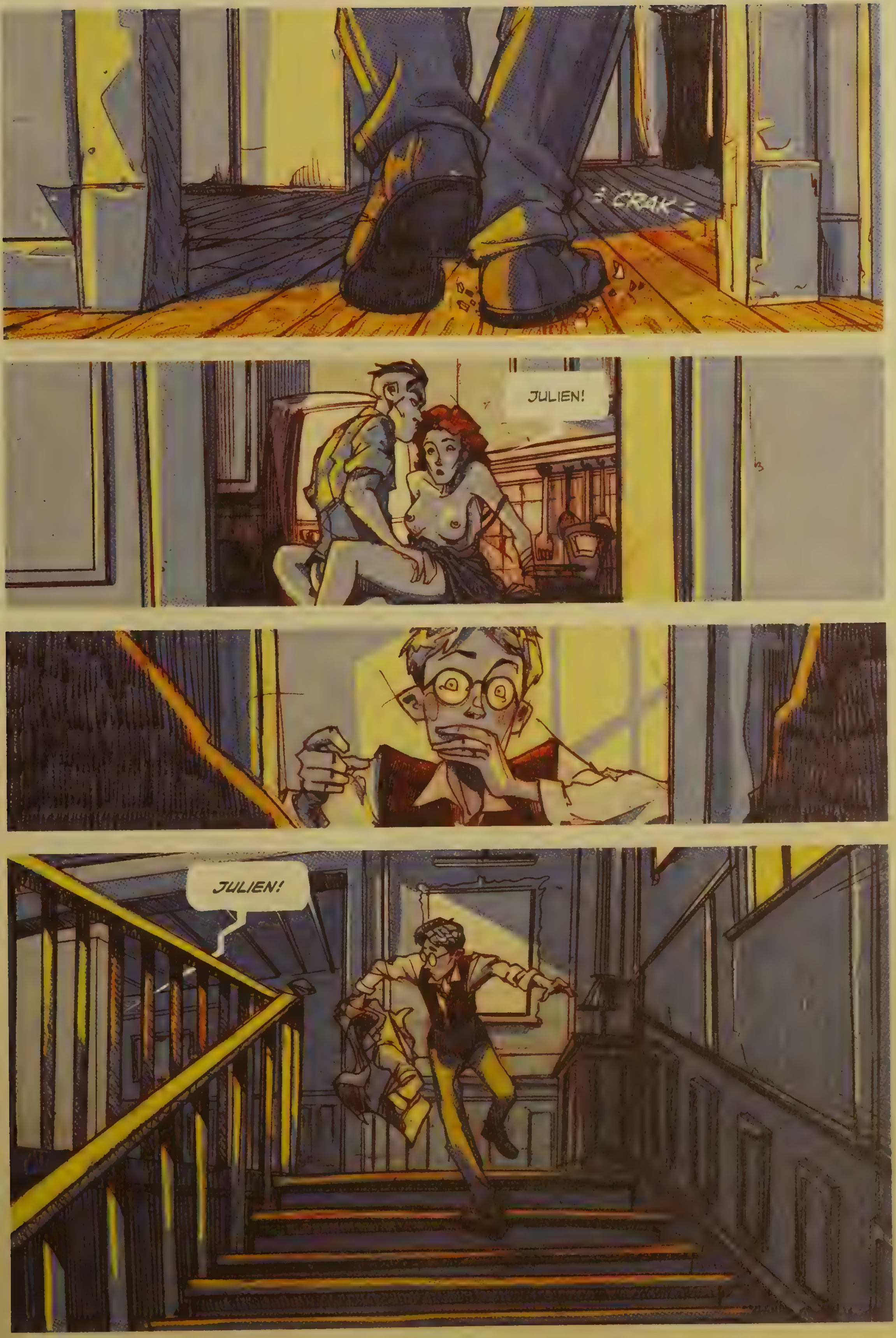

OH! THERE HE IS!
HERR BERCHTOLD, MEET MY SON JULIEN.
JU, SAY HELLO TO HERR KOMMANDANT.
OH, PLEASE... CALL ME *JOSEPH*.
HOW TO SAY HERE... "ENCHANTÉ!"

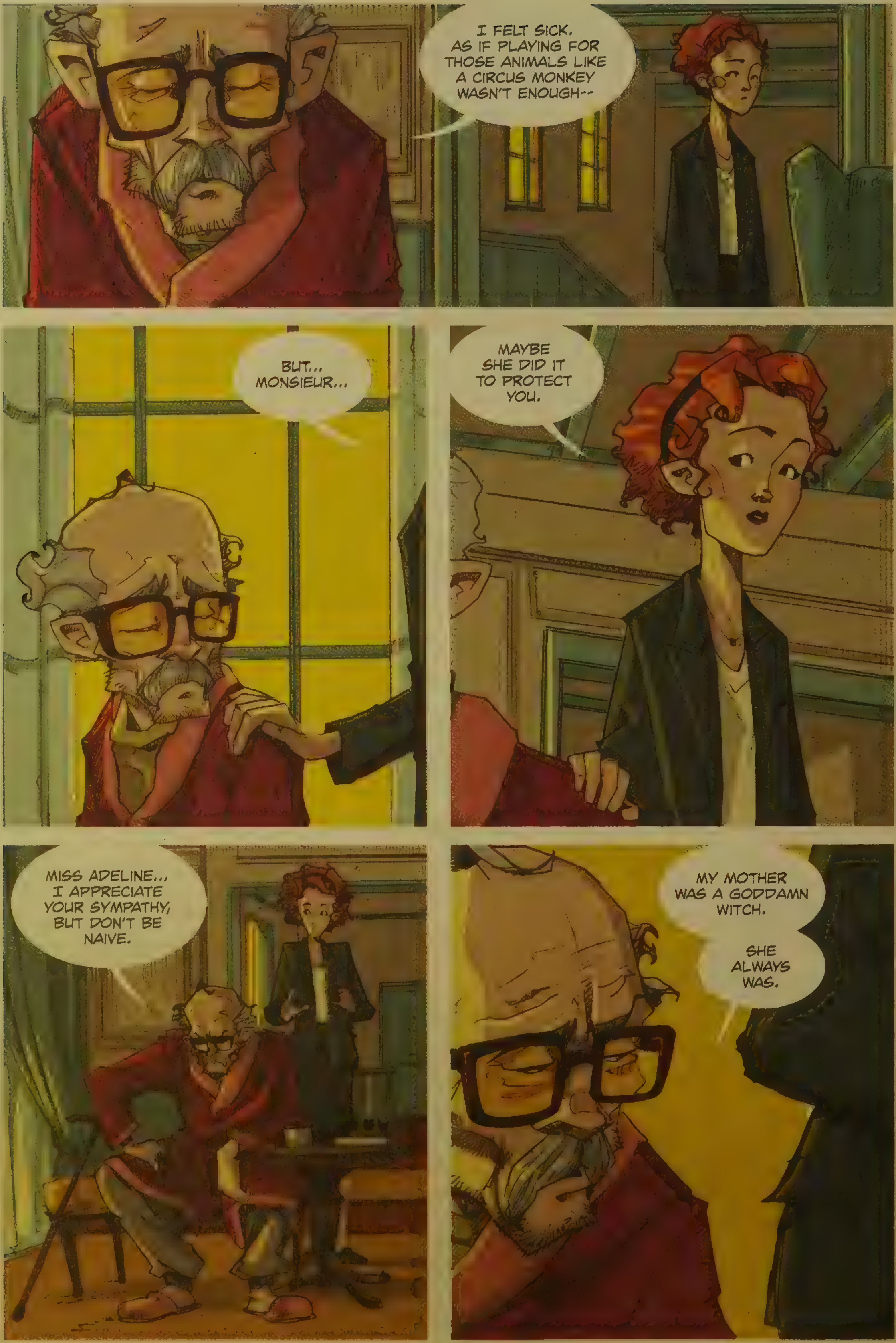

AND SUDDENLY, WE WERE ALL BEST FRIENDS...
ES IST SO SCHÖN SOLDAT ZU SEIN!
ROSEMARIE!
I TOLD YOU HE WAS GOOD, HERR BERCHTOLD! DID YOU LIKE IT?
EIN VIRTUOSE! BRAVO!
MY JU WILL BE FAMOUS, ONE DAY. JUST WAIT AND SEE!

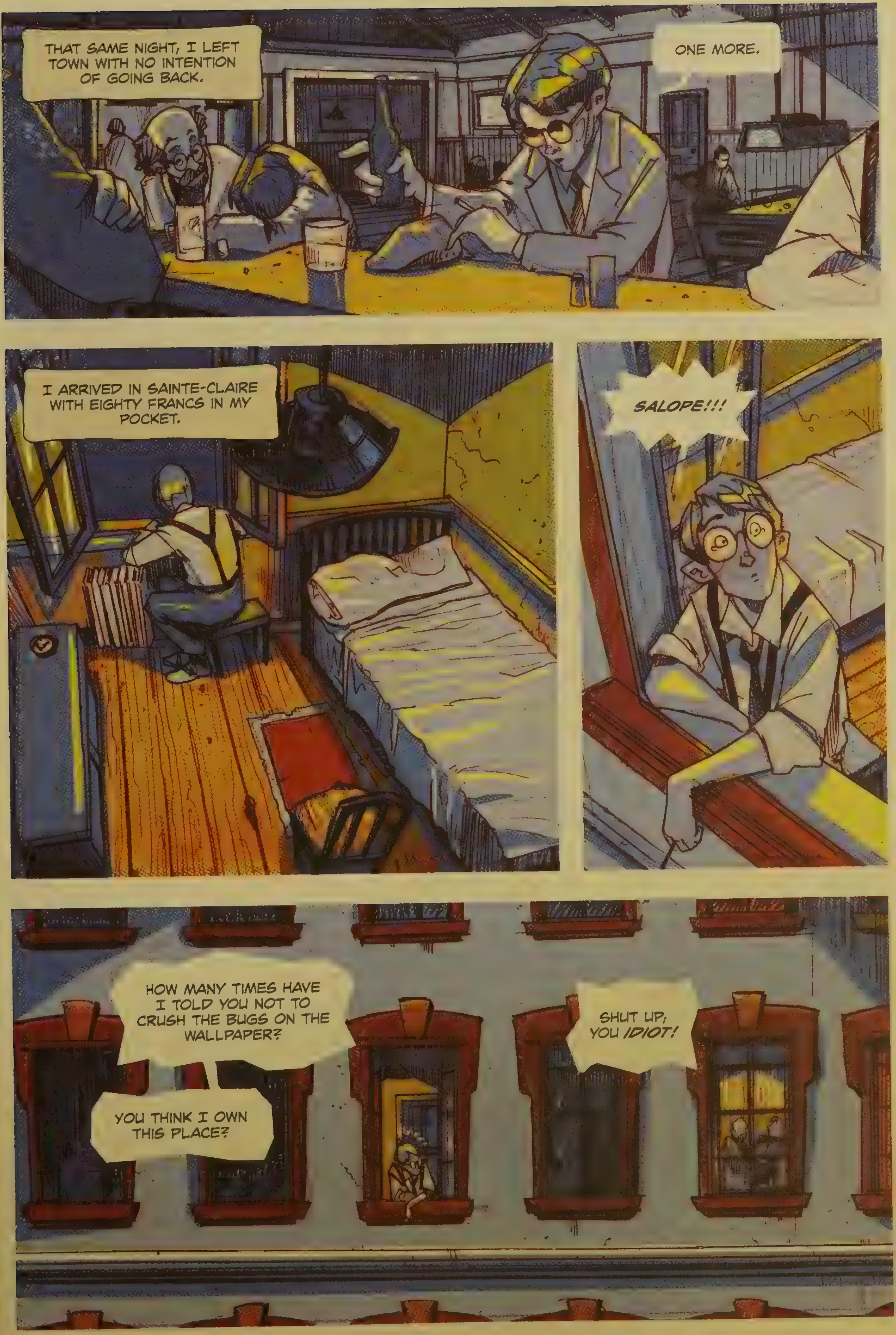

...AND THAT HATRED BEGAN TO *GROW*.
...SONS OF BITCHES...
BUT, THIS TIME, IT WASN'T FOR FRANÇOIS SAMSON.

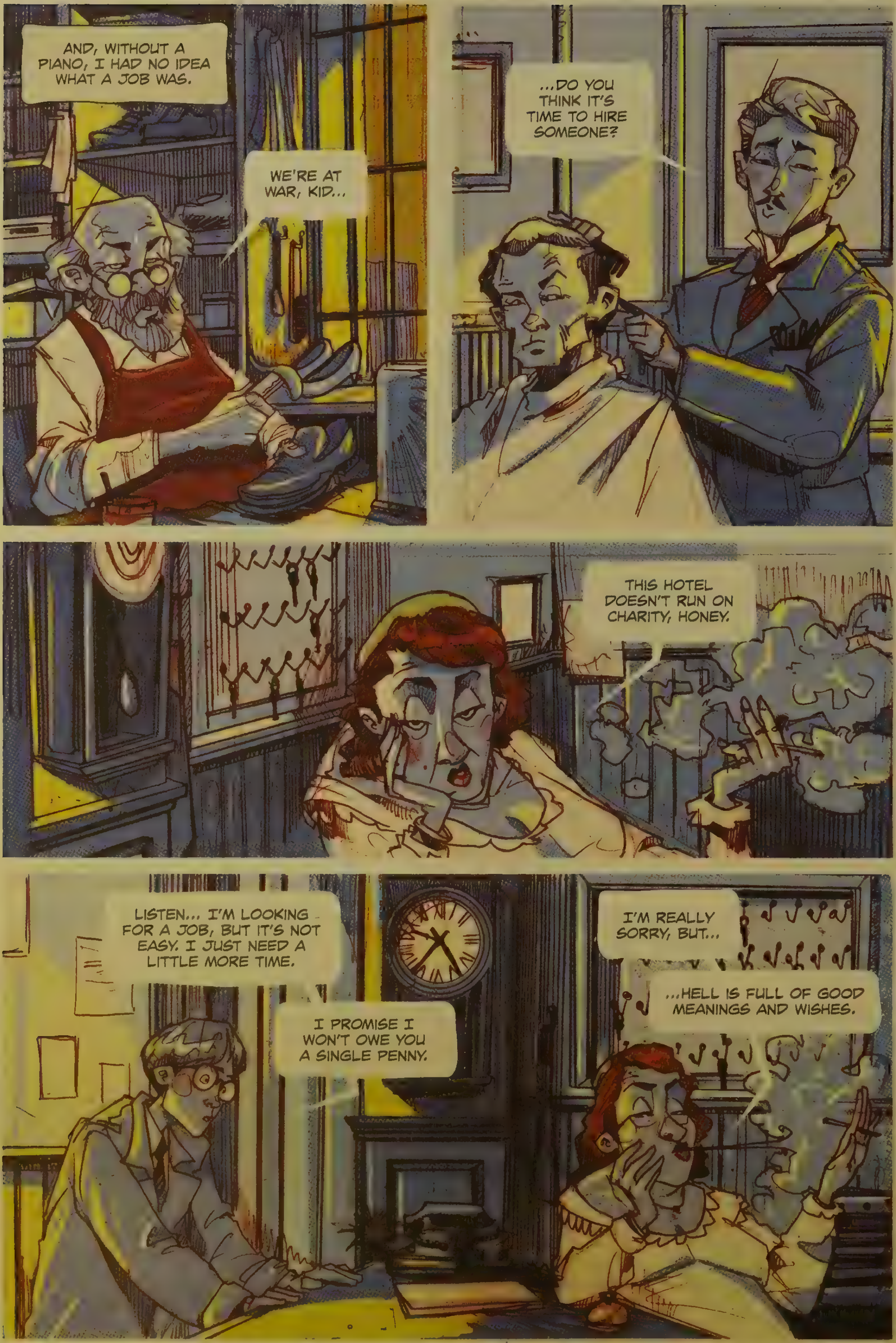

MAMAN?

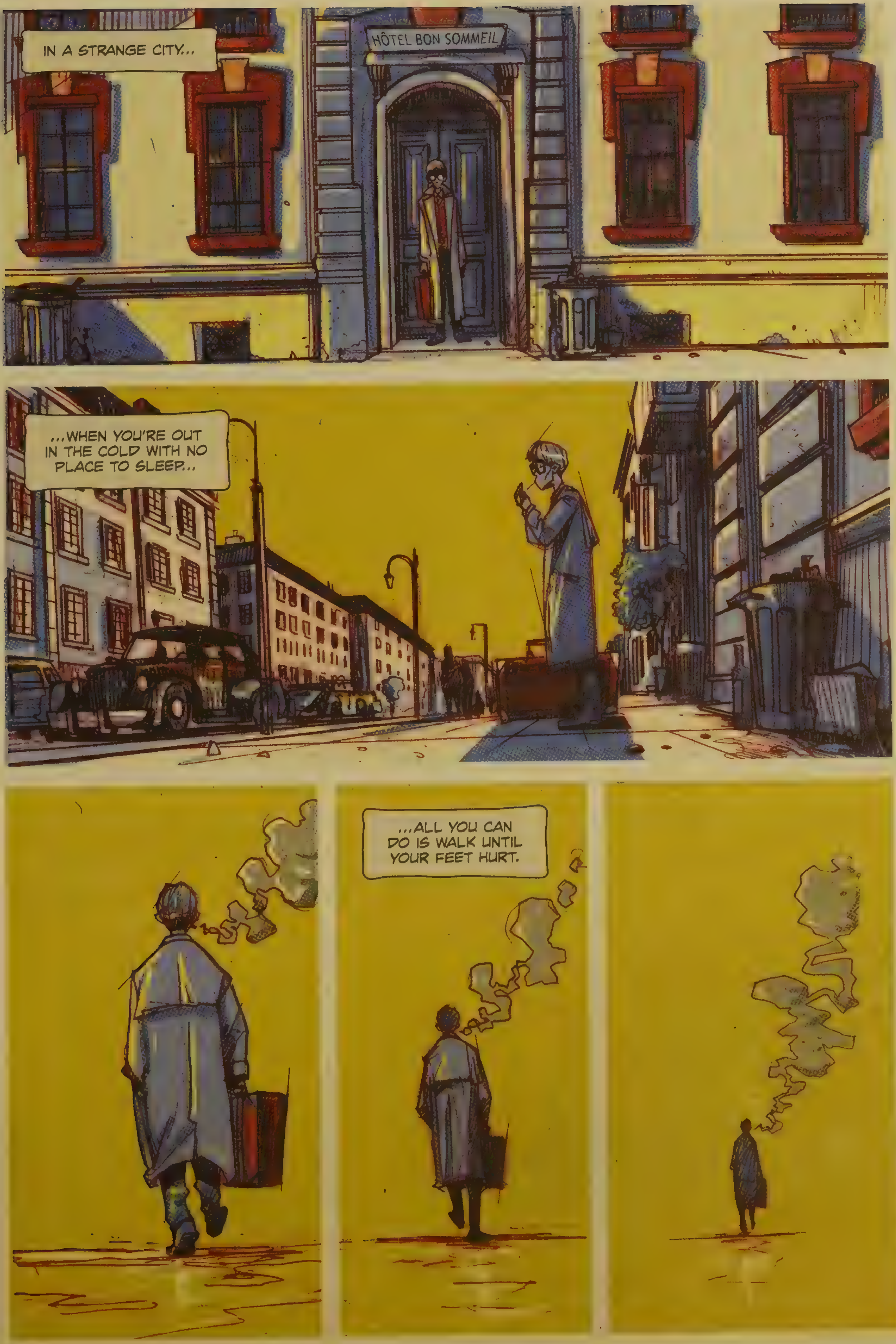


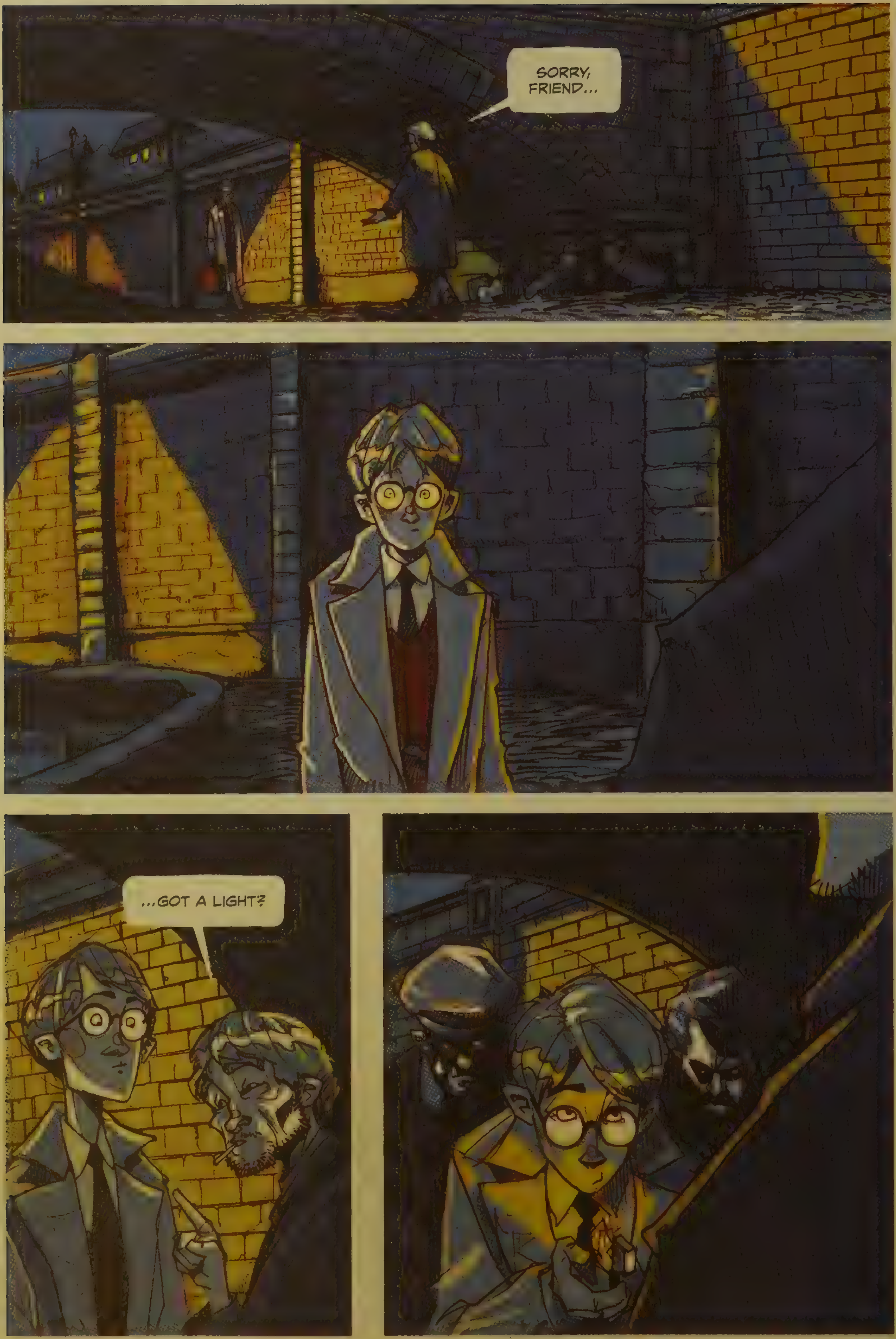

CRAK
JULIEN!
JULIEN!

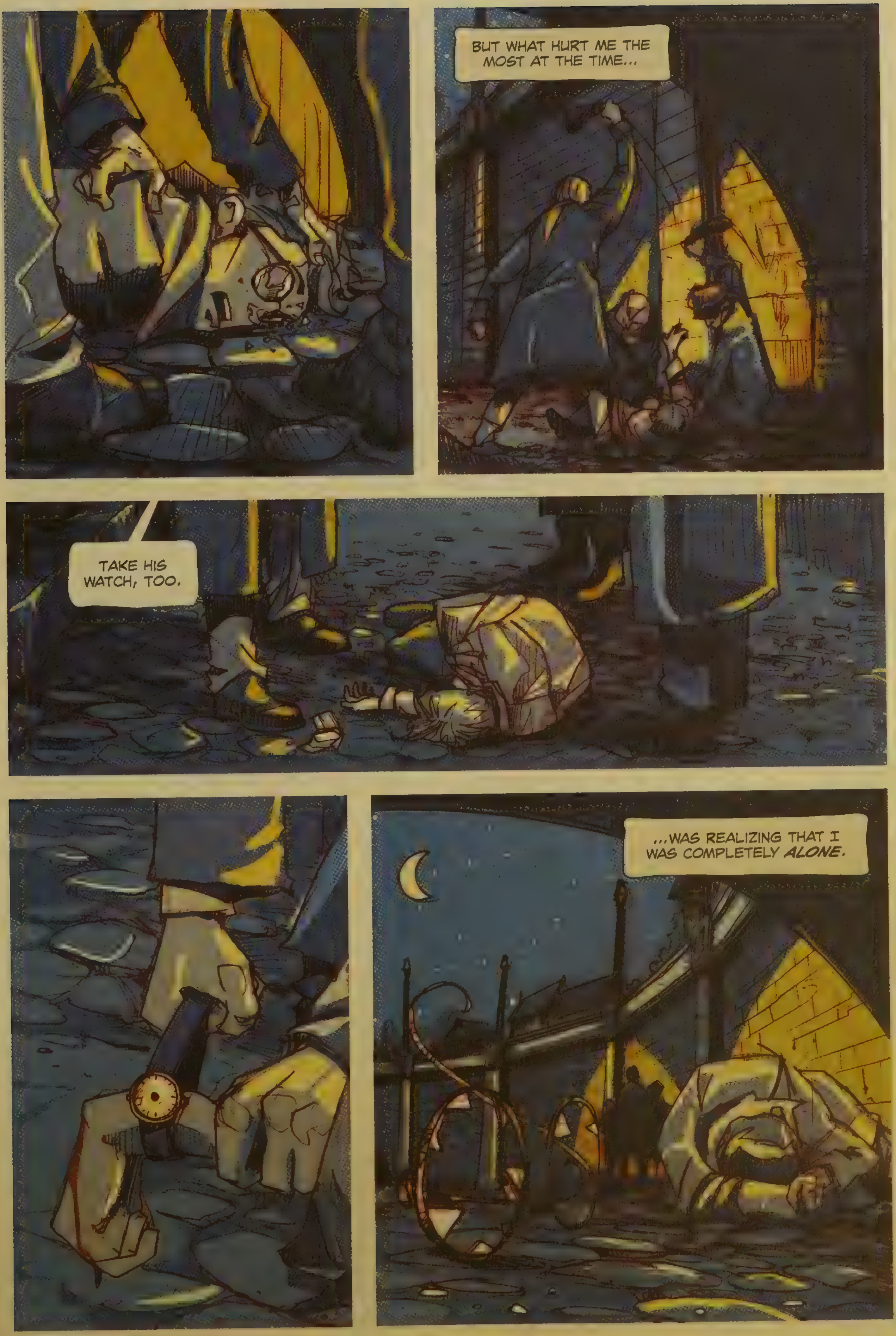

I FELT SICK. AS IF PLAYING FOR THOSE ANIMALS LIKE A CIRCUS MONKEY WASN'T ENOUGH--
BUT... MONSIEUR...
MAYBE SHE DID IT TO PROTECT YOU.
MISS ADELINE... I APPRECIATE YOUR SYMPATHY, BUT DON'T BE NAIVE.
MY MOTHER WAS A GODDAMN WITCH.
SHE ALWAYS WAS.

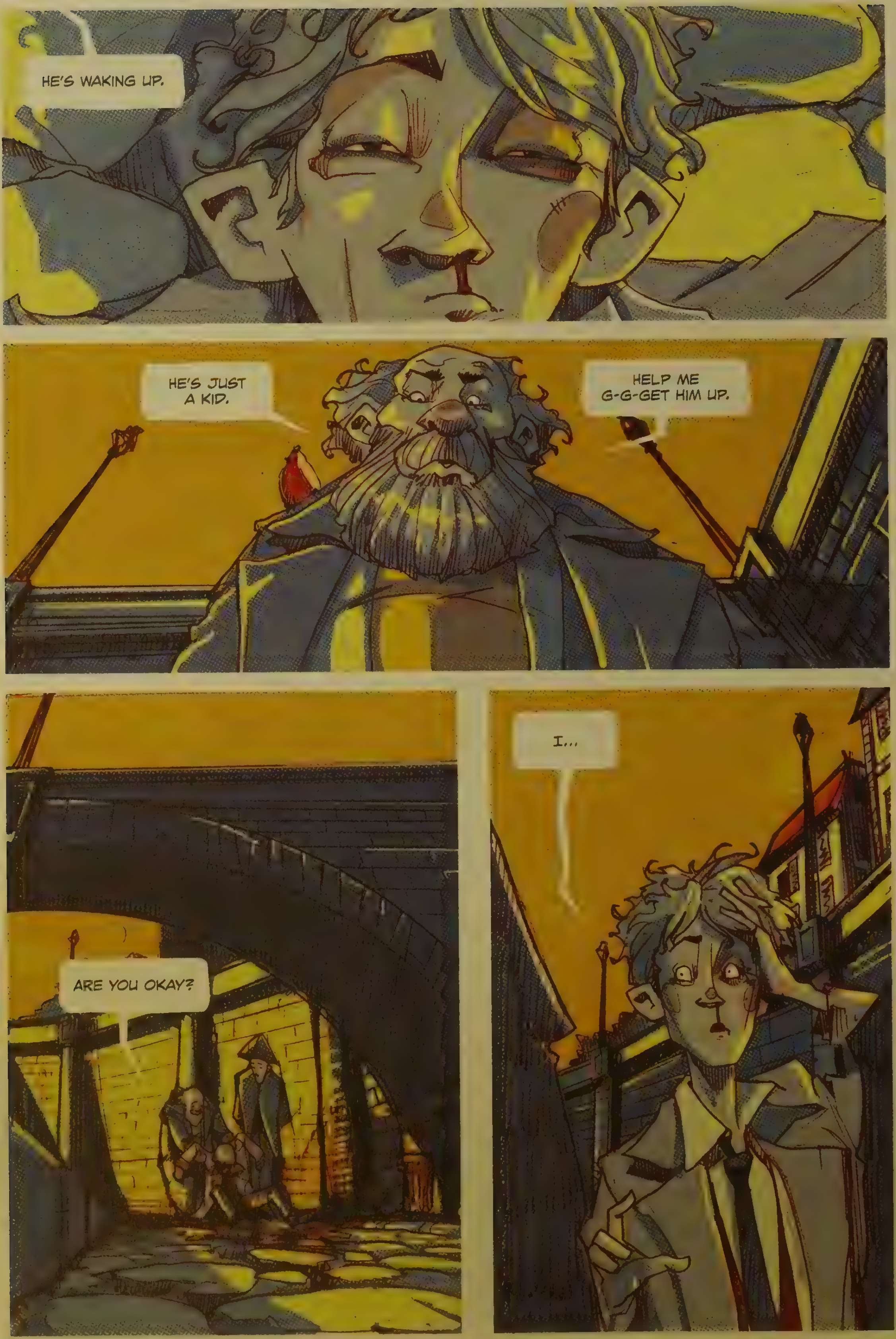

THAT SAME NIGHT, I LEFT TOWN WITH NO INTENTION OF GOING BACK.
ONE MORE.
I ARRIVED IN SAINTE-CLAIRE WITH EIGHTY FRANCS IN MY POCKET.
SALOPE!!!
HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I TOLD YOU NOT TO CRUSH THE BUGS ON THE WALLPAPER?
YOU THINK I OWN THIS PLACE?
SHUT UP, YOU *IDIOT!*

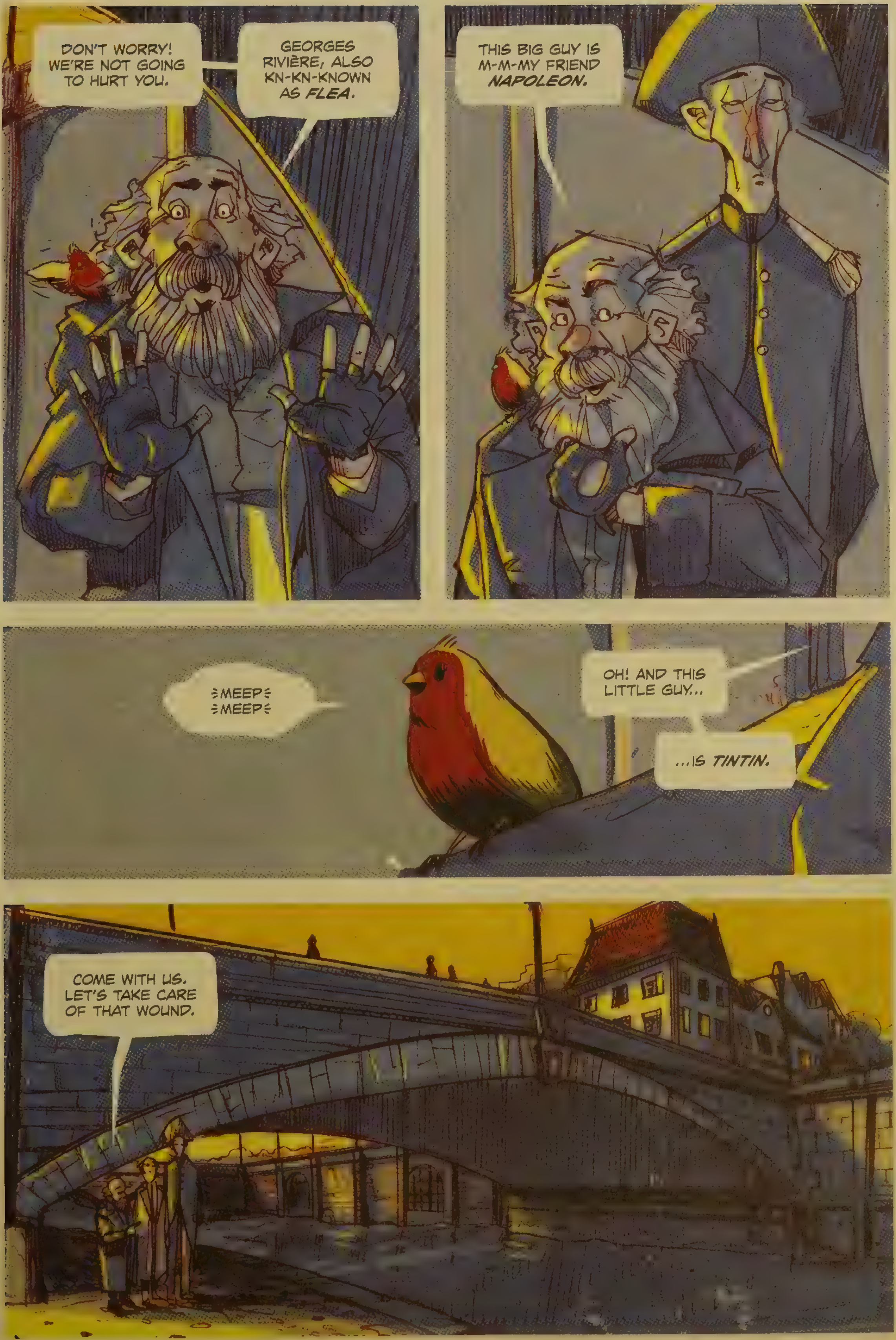

AND, WITHOUT A PIANO, I HAD NO IDEA WHAT A JOB WAS.
WE'RE AT WAR, KID...
...DO YOU THINK IT'S TIME TO HIRE SOMEONE?
THIS HOTEL DOESN'T RUN ON CHARITY, HONEY.
LISTEN... I'M LOOKING FOR A JOB, BUT IT'S NOT EASY. I JUST NEED A LITTLE MORE TIME.
I PROMISE I WON'T OWE YOU A SINGLE PENNY.
I'M REALLY SORRY, BUT...
...HELL IS FULL OF GOOD MEANINGS AND WISHES.

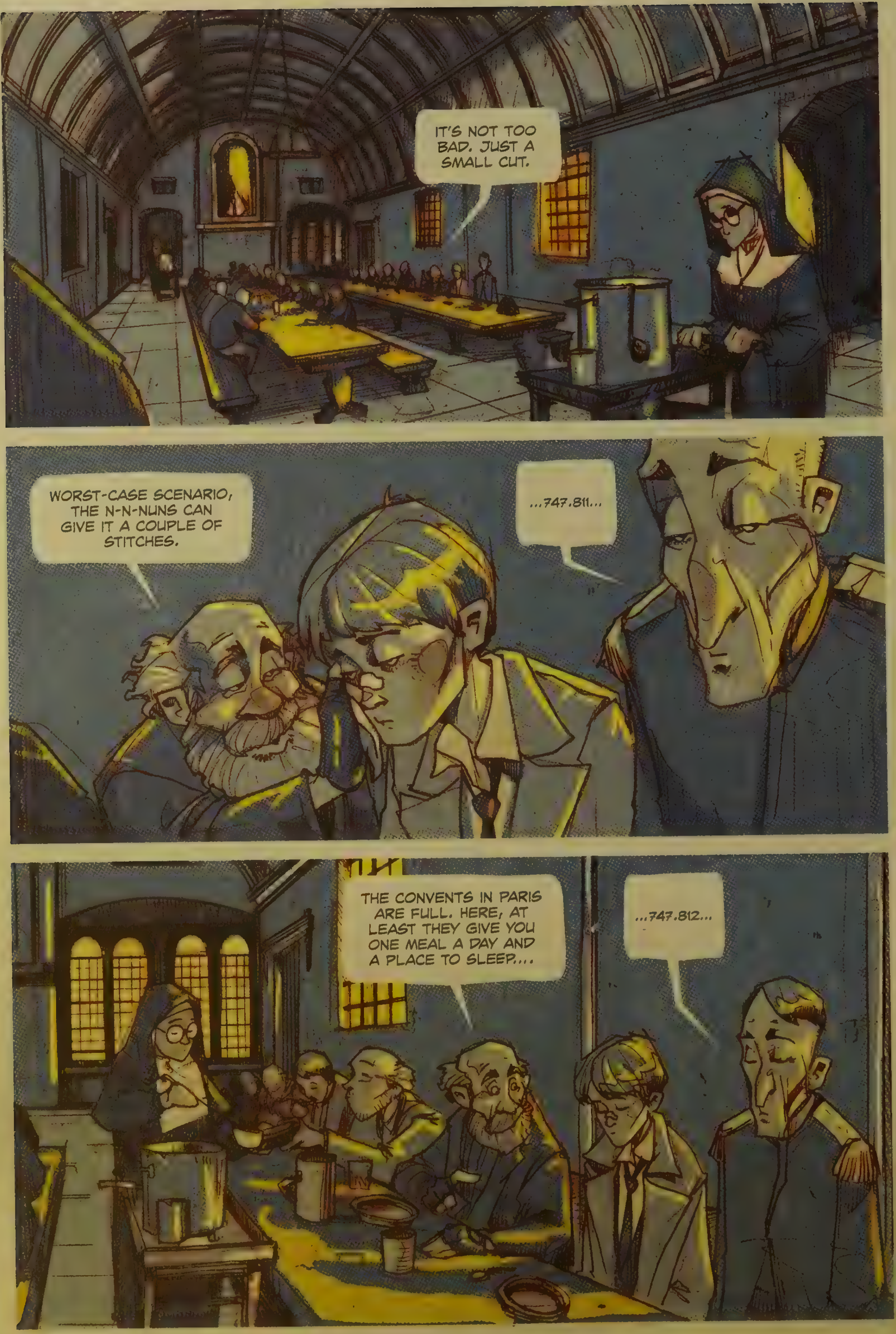

IN A STRANGE CITY...
HÔTEL BON SOMMEIL
...WHEN YOU'RE OUT IN THE COLD WITH NO PLACE TO SLEEP...
...ALL YOU CAN DO IS WALK UNTIL YOUR FEET HURT.

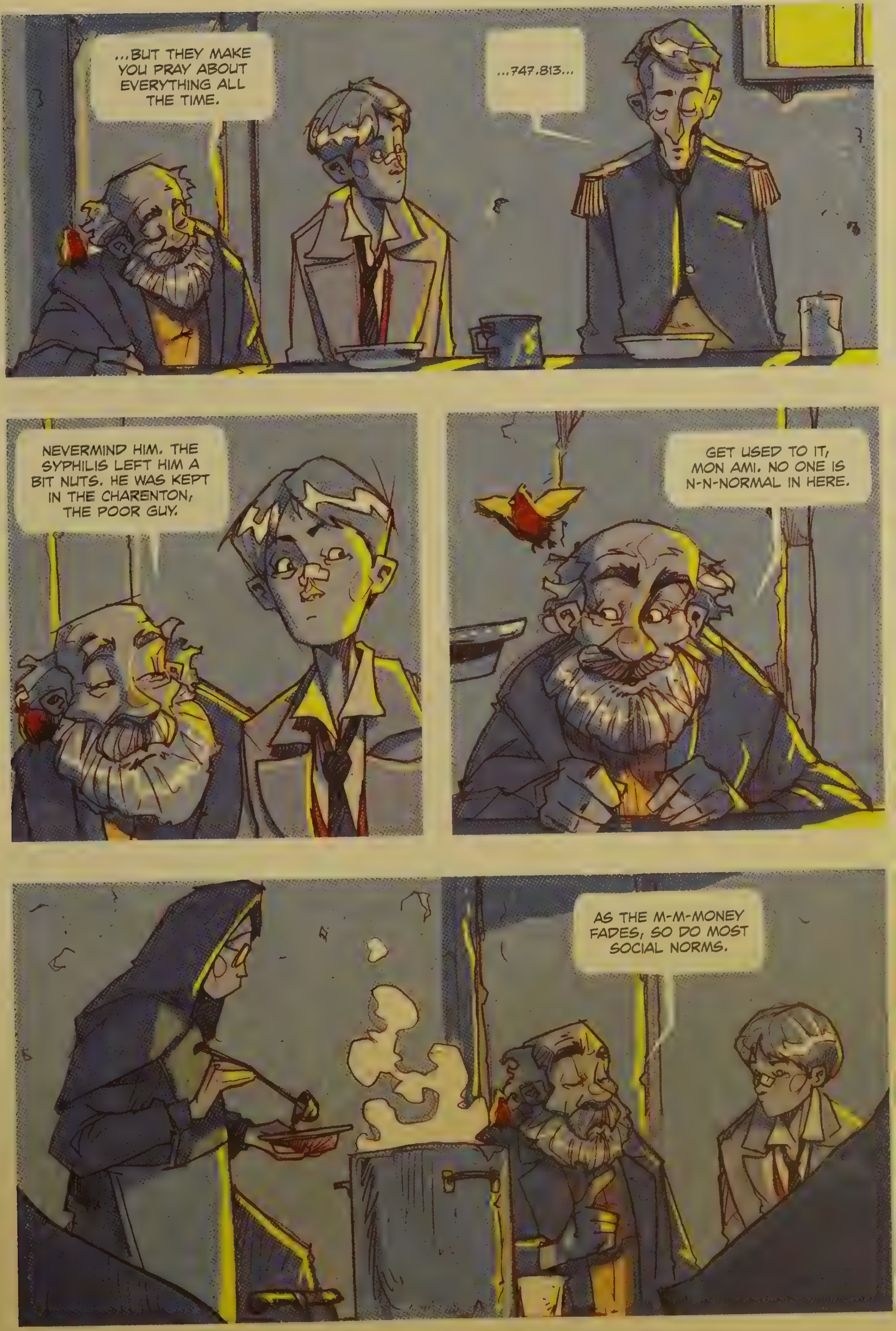

SORRY, FRIEND...
...GOT A LIGHT?

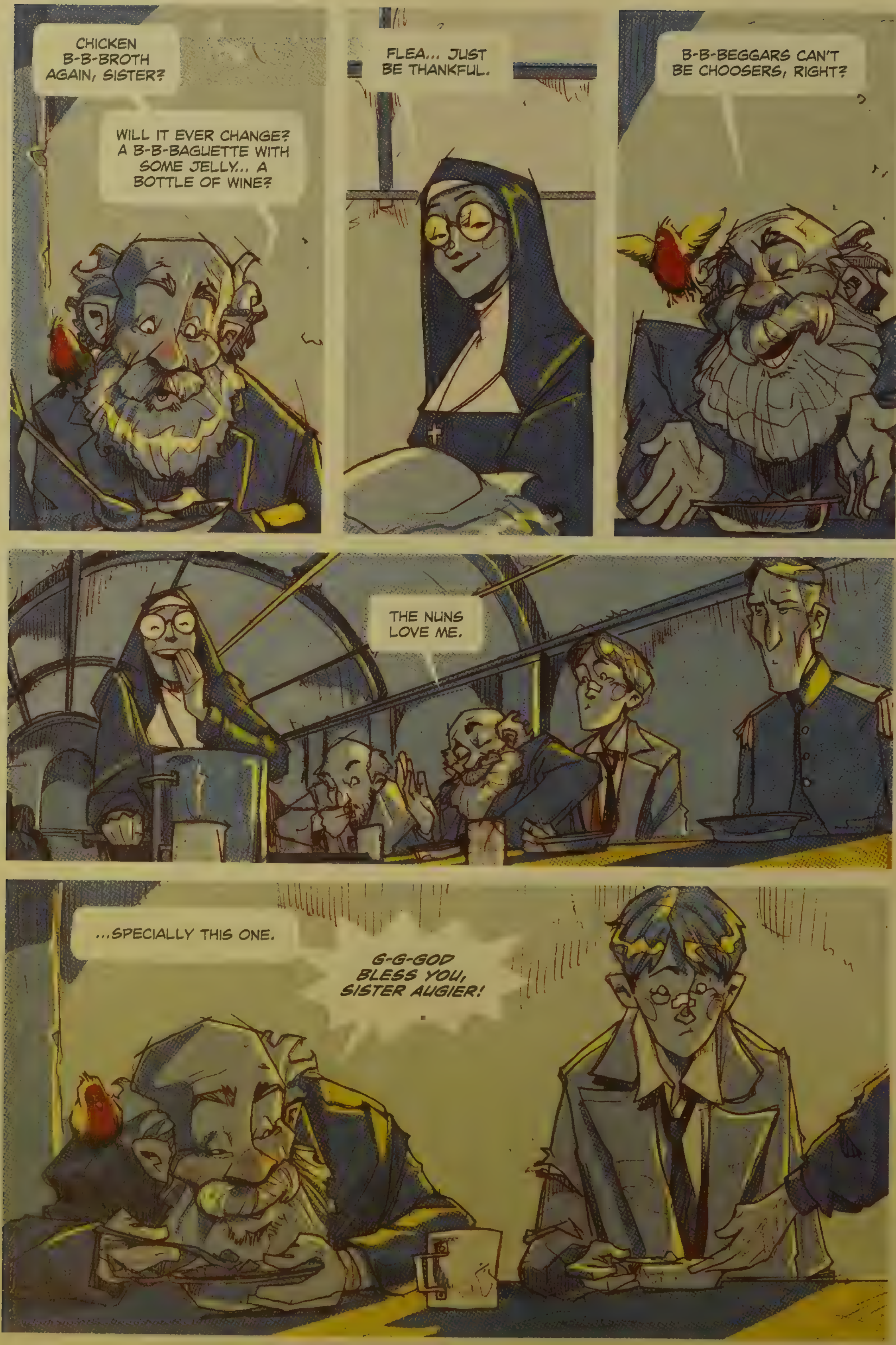

BUT WHAT HURT ME THE MOST AT THE TIME...
TAKE HIS WATCH, TOO.
...WAS REALIZING THAT I WAS COMPLETELY *ALONE*.

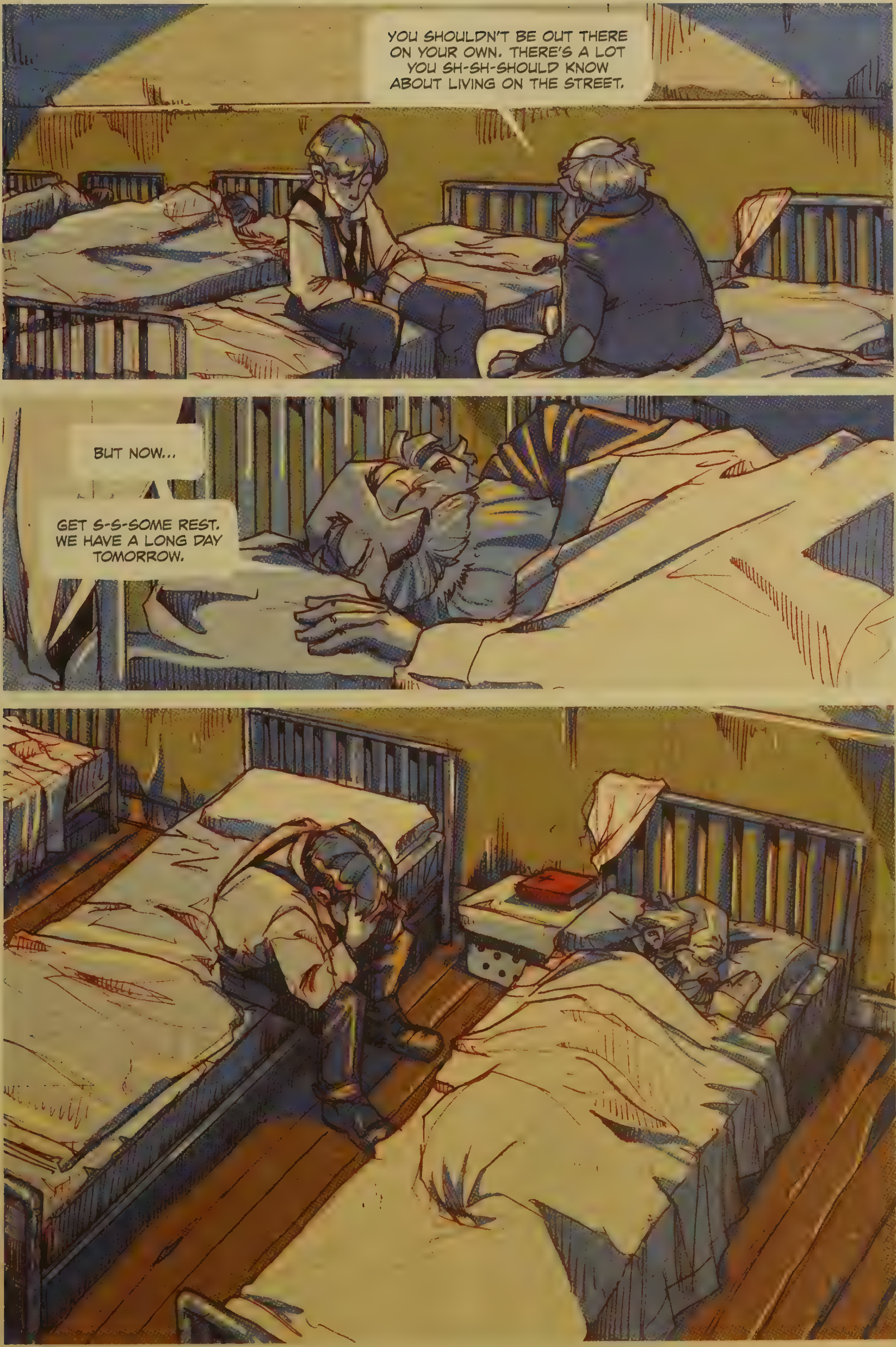

HE'S WAKING UP.
HE'S JUST A KID.
HELP ME G-G-GET HIM UP.
ARE YOU OKAY?
I...

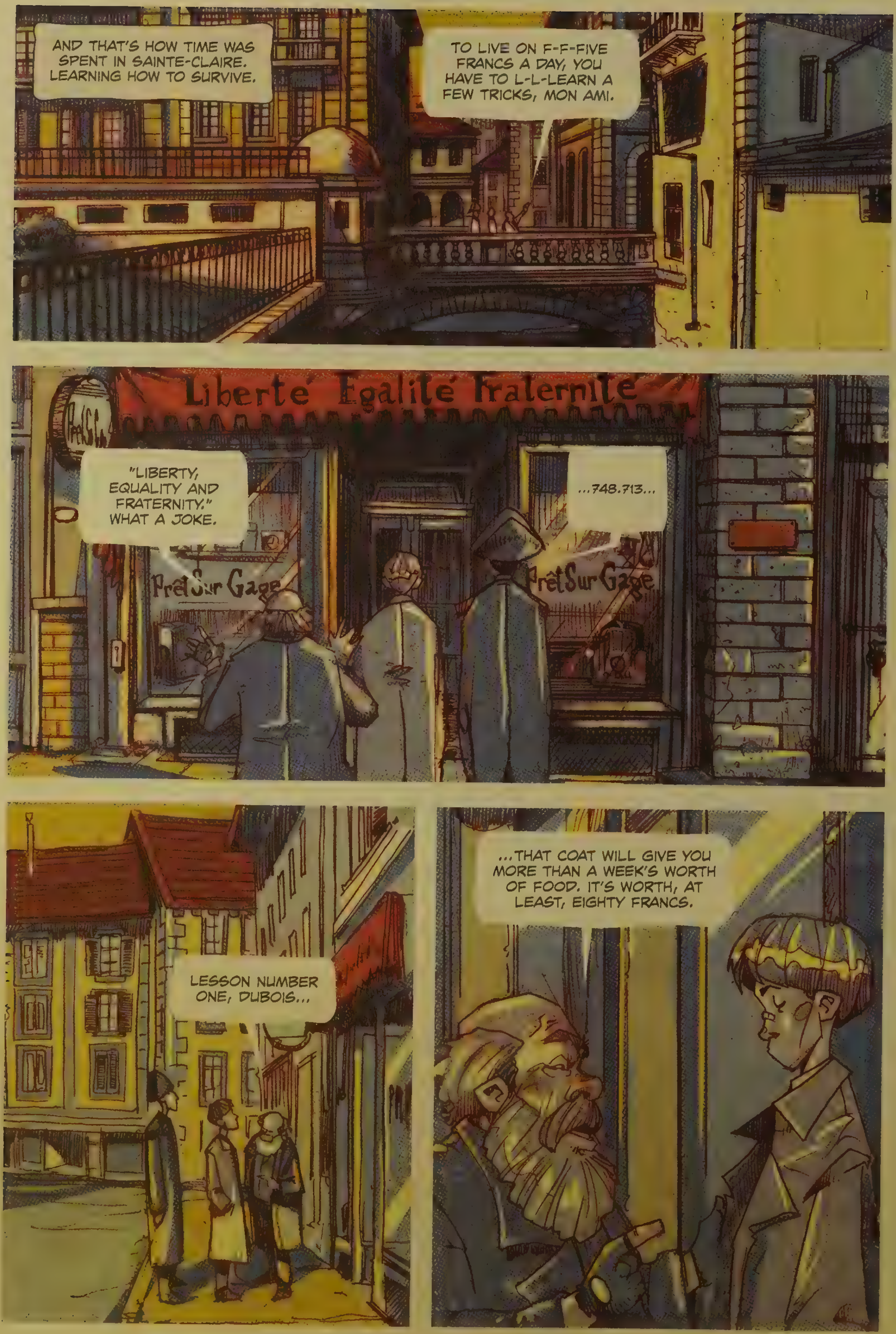

DON'T WORRY! WE'RE NOT GOING TO HURT YOU.
GEORGES RIVIÈRE, ALSO KN-KN-KNOWN AS *FLEA*.
THIS BIG GUY IS M-M-MY FRIEND ***NAPOLEON***.
≡MEEP≡ ≡MEEP≡
OH! AND THIS LITTLE GUY...
...IS *TINTIN*.
COME WITH US. LET'S TAKE CARE OF THAT WOUND.

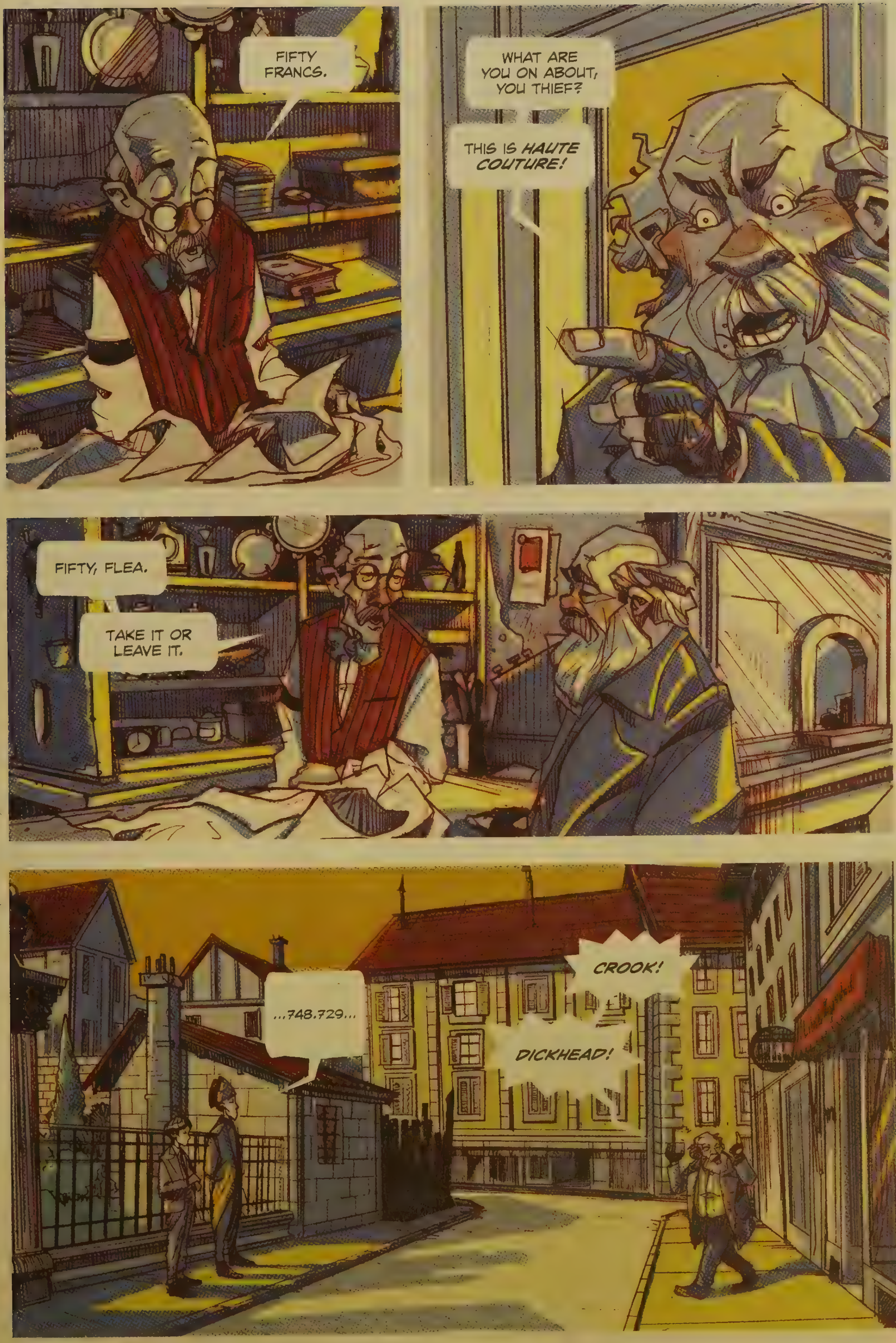

IT'S NOT TOO BAD. JUST A SMALL CUT.
WORST-CASE SCENARIO, THE N-N-NUNS CAN GIVE IT A COUPLE OF STITCHES.
...747.811...
THE CONVENTS IN PARIS ARE FULL. HERE, AT LEAST THEY GIVE YOU ONE MEAL A DAY AND A PLACE TO SLEEP....
...747.812...

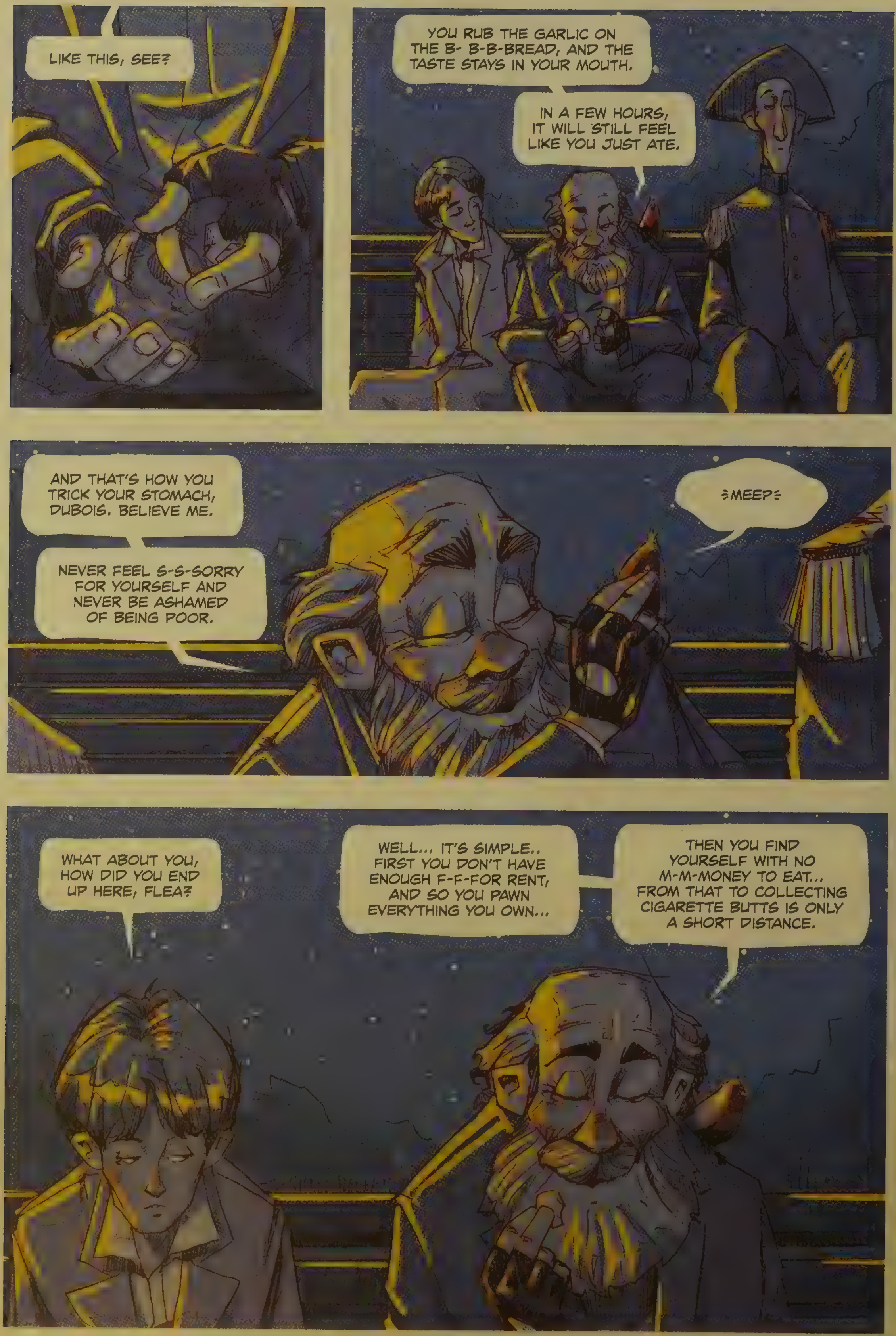

...BUT THEY MAKE YOU PRAY ABOUT EVERYTHING ALL THE TIME.
...747.813...
NEVERMIND HIM. THE SYPHILIS LEFT HIM A BIT NUTS. HE WAS KEPT IN THE CHARENTON, THE POOR GUY.
GET USED TO IT, MON AMI. NO ONE IS N-N-NORMAL IN HERE.
AS THE M-M-MONEY FADES, SO DO MOST SOCIAL NORMS.

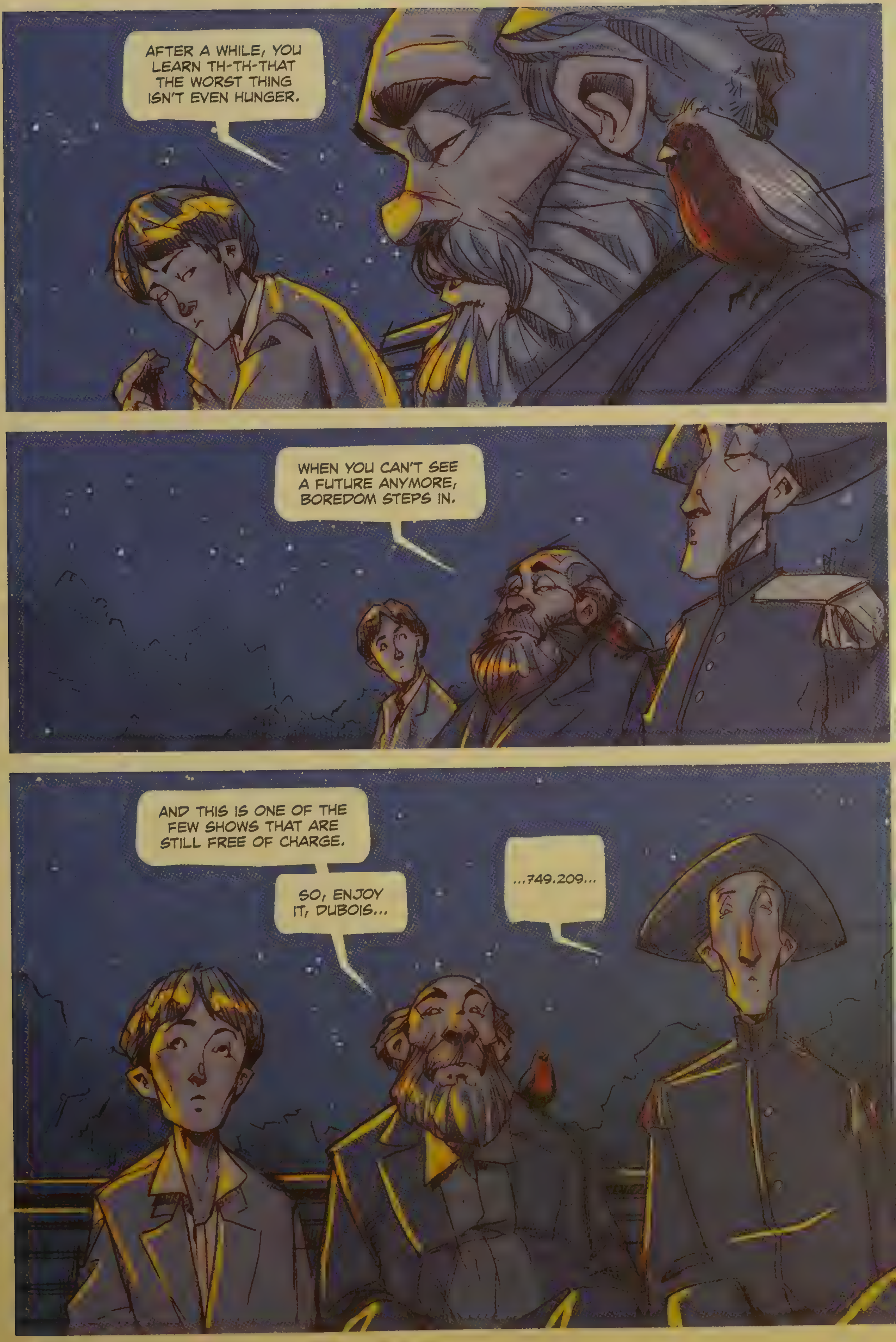

CHICKEN B-B-BROTH AGAIN, SISTER?
WILL IT EVER CHANGE? A B-B-BAGUETTE WITH SOME JELLY... A BOTTLE OF WINE?
FLEA... JUST BE THANKFUL.
B-B-BEGGARS CAN'T BE CHOOSERS, RIGHT?
THE NUNS LOVE ME.
...SPECIALLY THIS ONE.
G-G-GOD BLESS YOU, SISTER AUGIER!

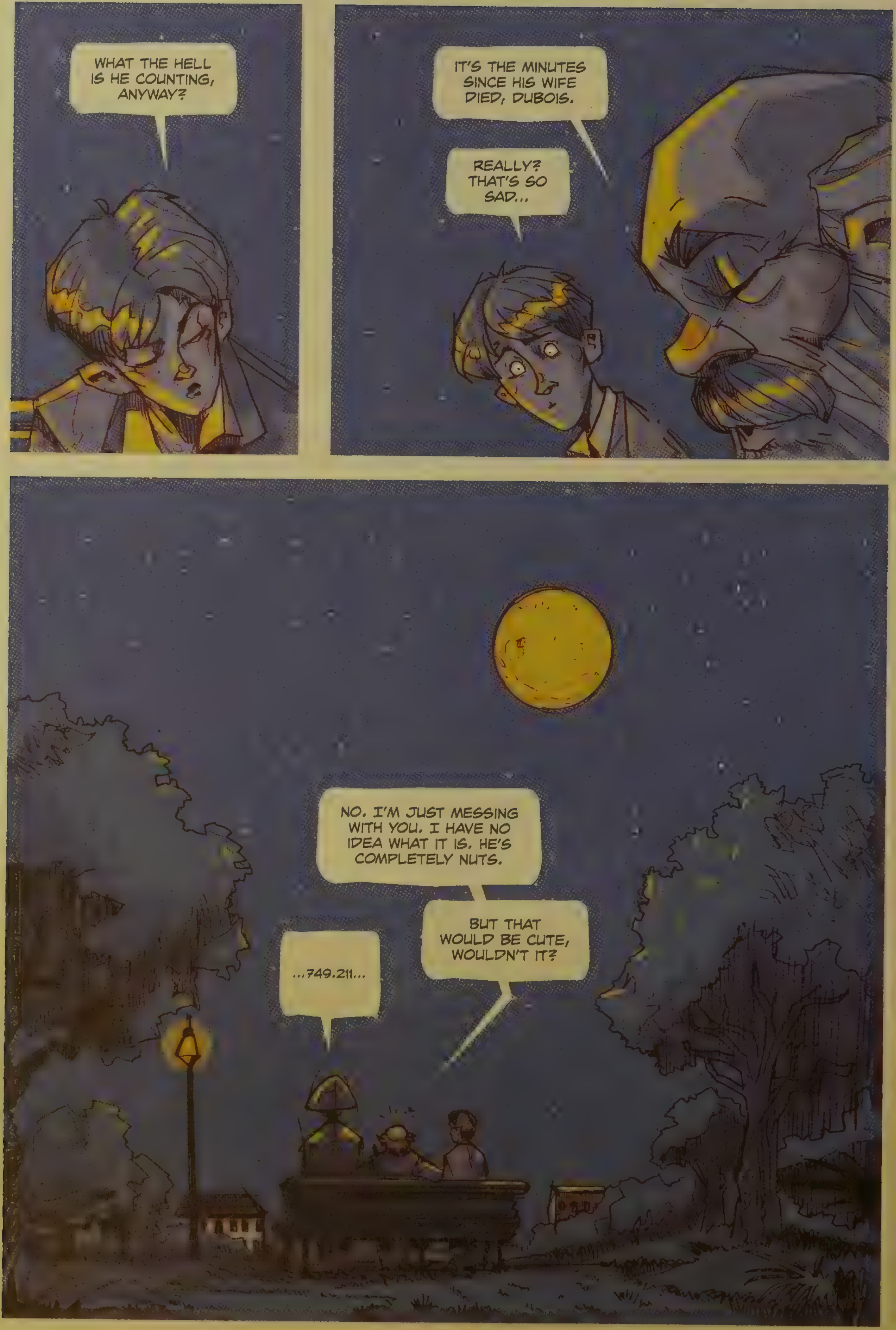

YOU SHOULDN'T BE OUT THERE ON YOUR OWN. THERE'S A LOT YOU SH-SH-SHOULD KNOW ABOUT LIVING ON THE STREET.
BUT NOW...
GET S-S-SOME REST. WE HAVE A LONG DAY TOMORROW.

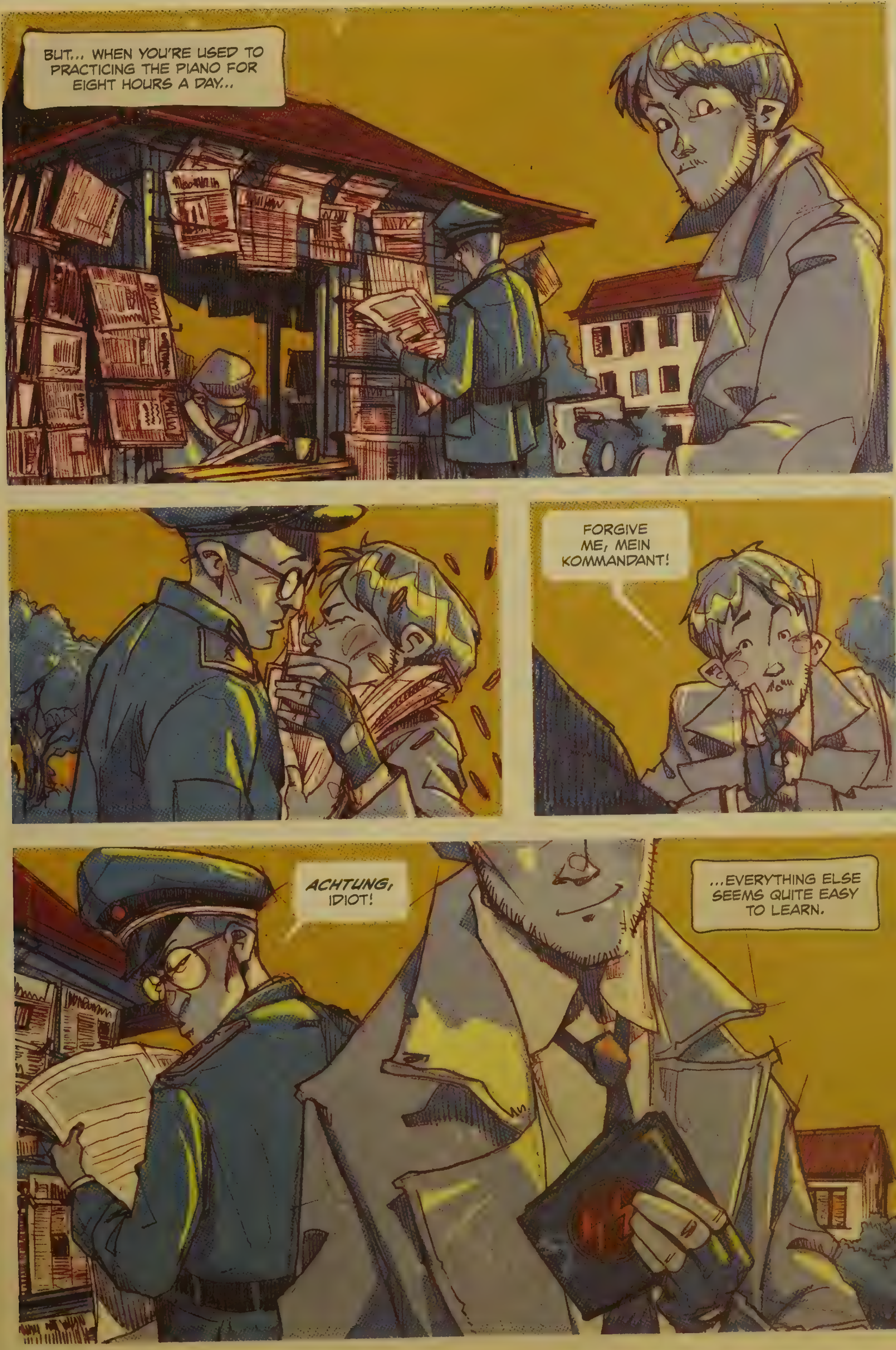

AND THAT'S HOW TIME WAS SPENT IN SAINTE-CLAIRE. LEARNING HOW TO SURVIVE.
TO LIVE ON F-F-FIVE FRANCS A DAY, YOU HAVE TO L-L-LEARN A FEW TRICKS, MON AMI.
Liberte Egalite Fraternite
"LIBERTY, EQUALITY AND FRATERNITY." WHAT A JOKE.
...748.713...
Prêt Sur Gage
Prêt Sur Gage
LESSON NUMBER ONE, DUBOIS...
...THAT COAT WILL GIVE YOU MORE THAN A WEEK'S WORTH OF FOOD. IT'S WORTH, AT LEAST, EIGHTY FRANCS.

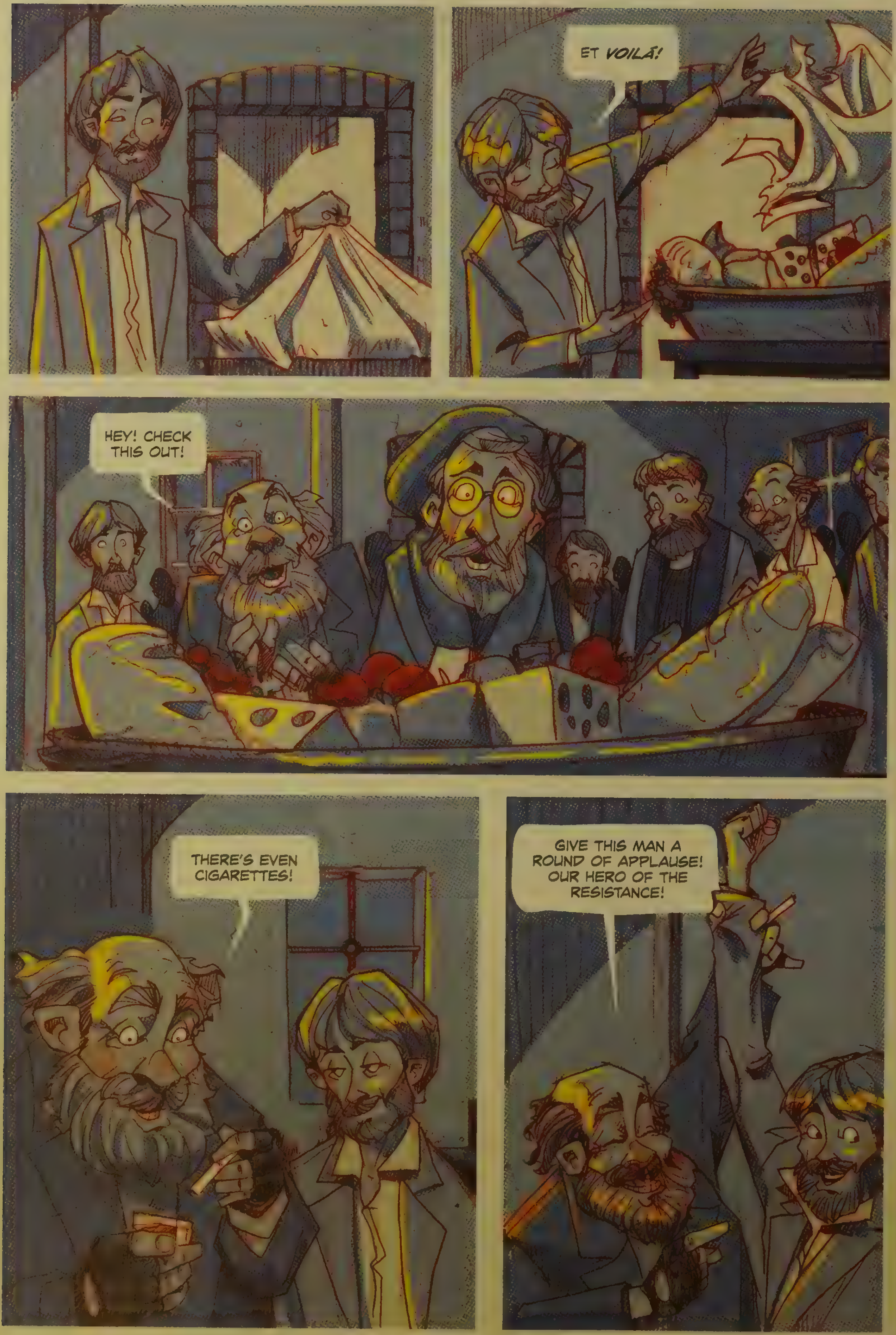

FIFTY FRANCS.
WHAT ARE YOU ON ABOUT, YOU THIEF?
THIS IS *HAUTE COUTURE!*
FIFTY, FLEA.
TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT.
...748.729...
CROOK!
DICKHEAD!

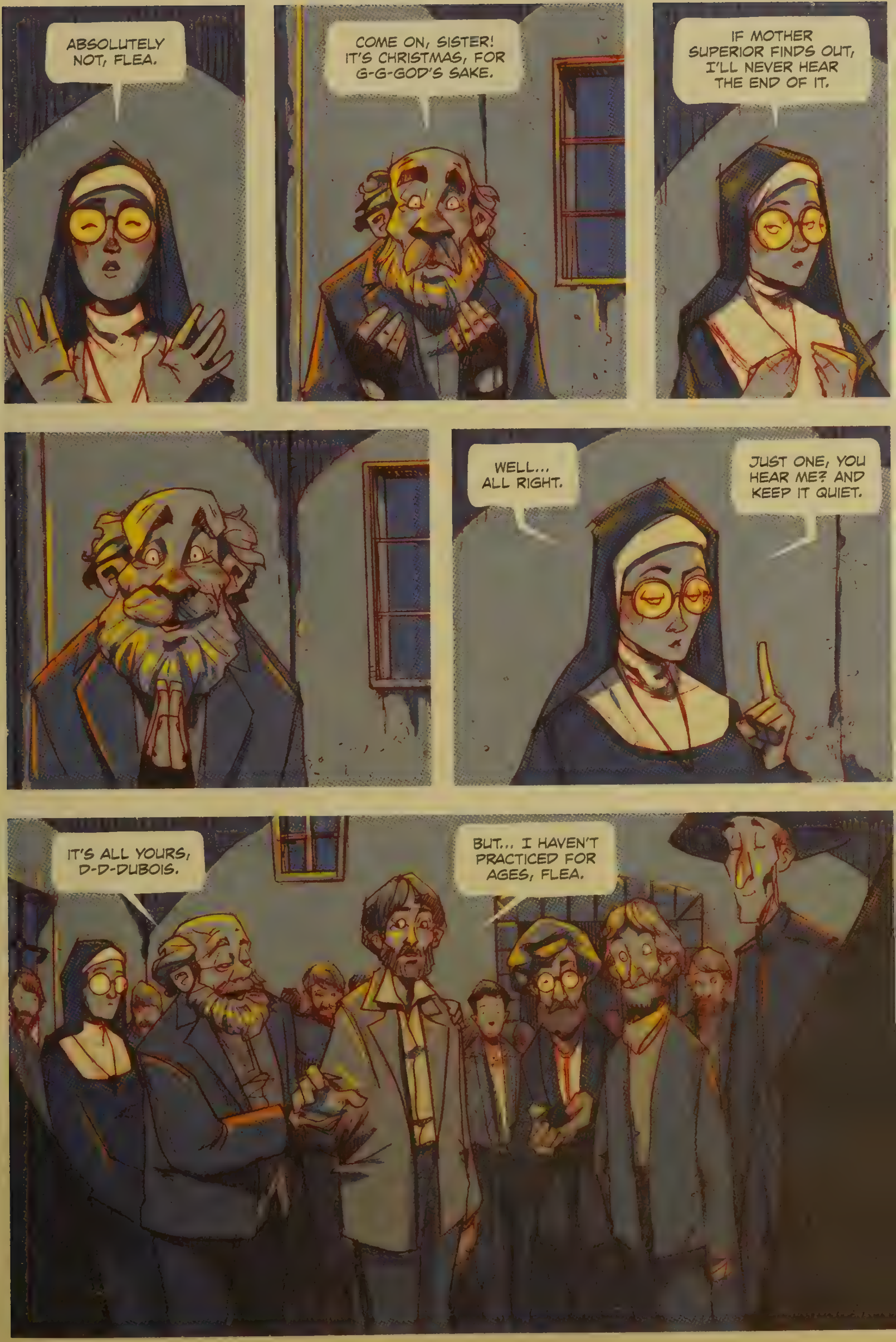

LIKE THIS, SEE?
YOU RUB THE GARLIC ON THE B- B-B-BREAD, AND THE TASTE STAYS IN YOUR MOUTH.
IN A FEW HOURS, IT WILL STILL FEEL LIKE YOU JUST ATE.
AND THAT'S HOW YOU TRICK YOUR STOMACH, DUBOIS. BELIEVE ME.
NEVER FEEL S-S-SORRY FOR YOURSELF AND NEVER BE ASHAMED OF BEING POOR.
≑MEEP≑
WHAT ABOUT YOU, HOW DID YOU END UP HERE, FLEA?
WELL... IT'S SIMPLE.. FIRST YOU DON'T HAVE ENOUGH F-F-FOR RENT, AND SO YOU PAWN EVERYTHING YOU OWN...
THEN YOU FIND YOURSELF WITH NO M-M-MONEY TO EAT... FROM THAT TO COLLECTING CIGARETTE BUTTS IS ONLY A SHORT DISTANCE.

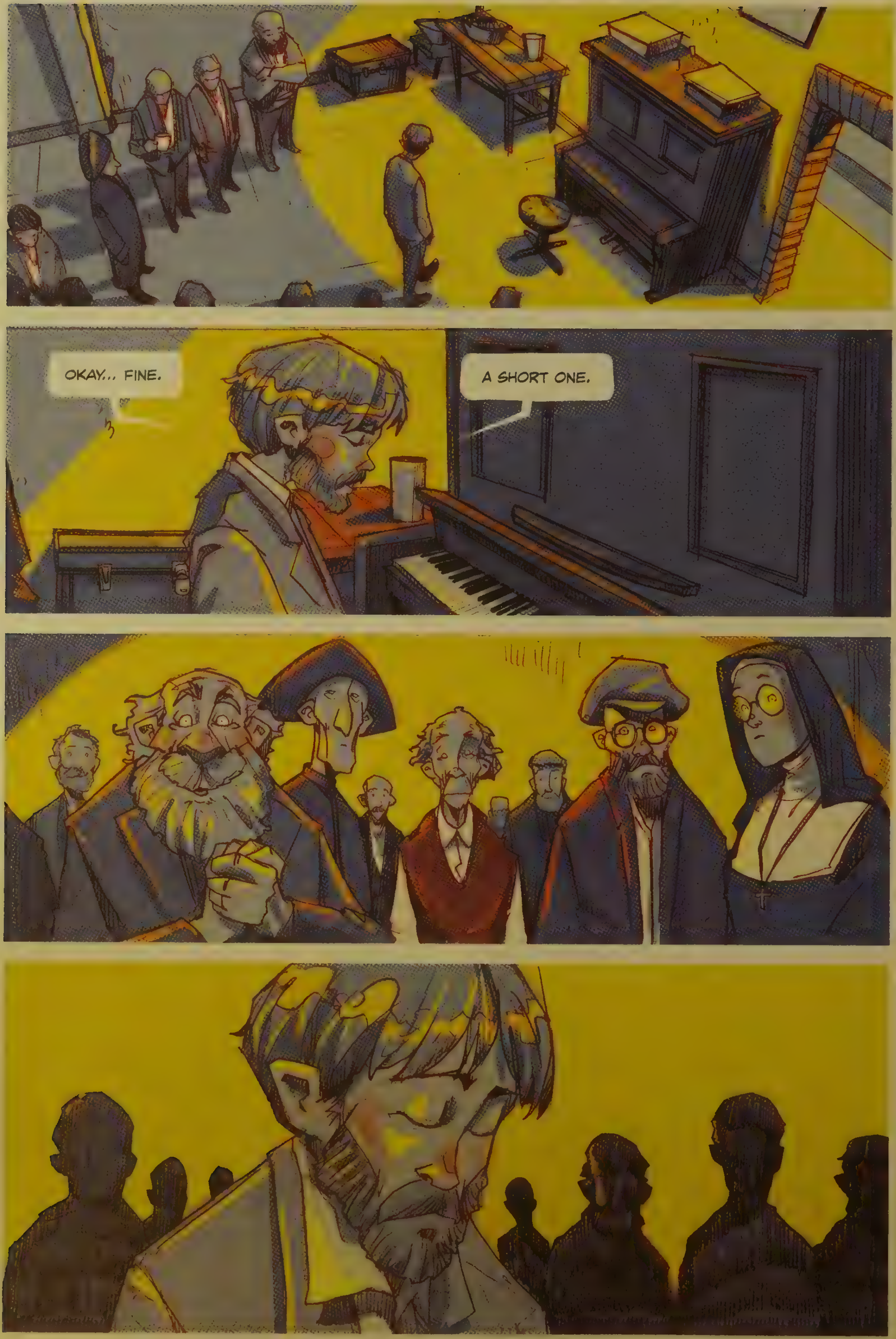

AFTER A WHILE, YOU LEARN TH-TH-THAT THE WORST THING ISN'T EVEN HUNGER.
WHEN YOU CAN'T SEE A FUTURE ANYMORE, BOREDOM STEPS IN.
AND THIS IS ONE OF THE FEW SHOWS THAT ARE STILL FREE OF CHARGE.
SO, ENJOY IT, DUBOIS...
...749.209...

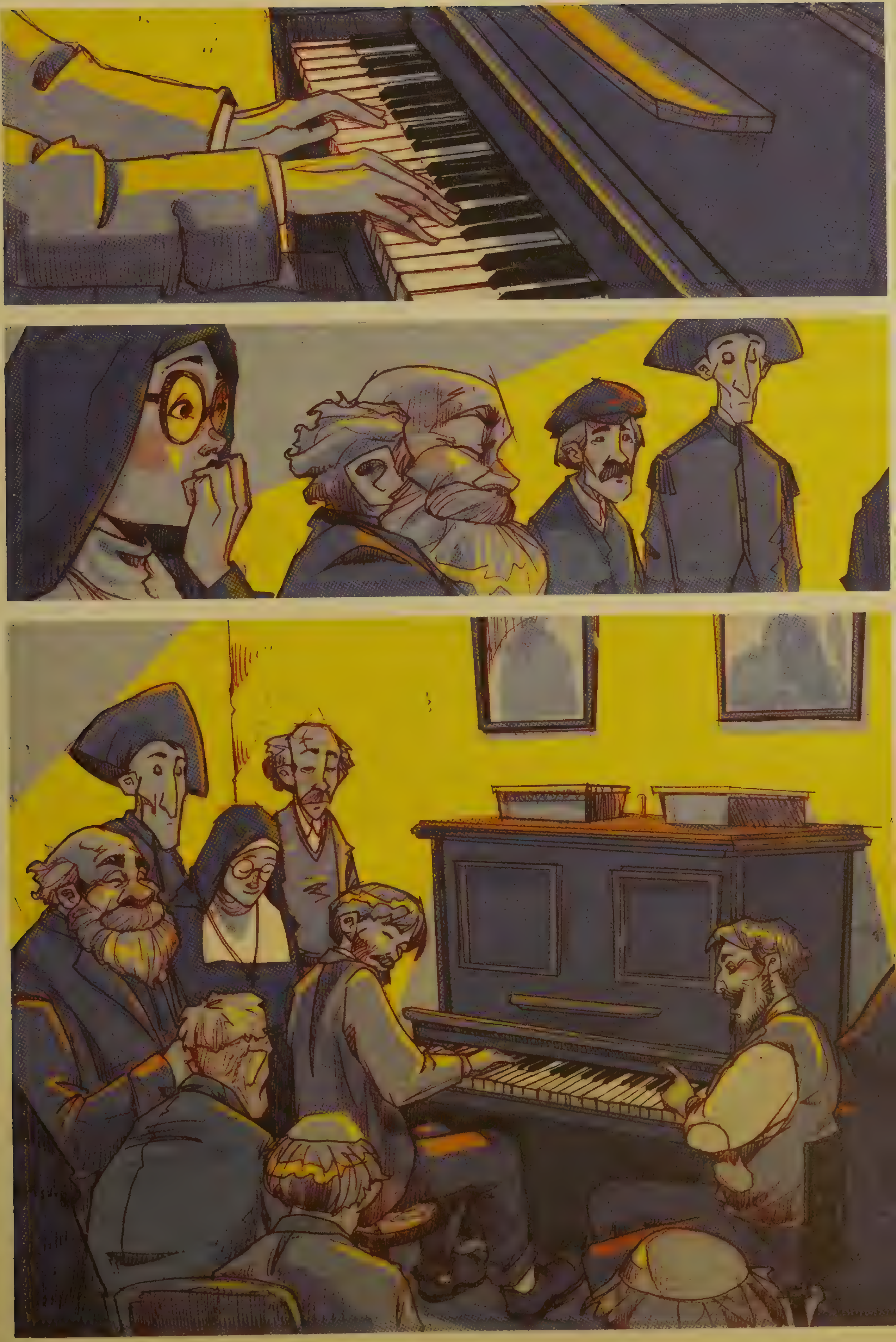

WHAT THE HELL IS HE COUNTING, ANYWAY?
IT'S THE MINUTES SINCE HIS WIFE DIED, DUBOIS.
REALLY? THAT'S SO SAD...
NO. I'M JUST MESSING WITH YOU. I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT IT IS. HE'S COMPLETELY NUTS.
BUT THAT WOULD BE CUTE, WOULDN'T IT?
...749.211...

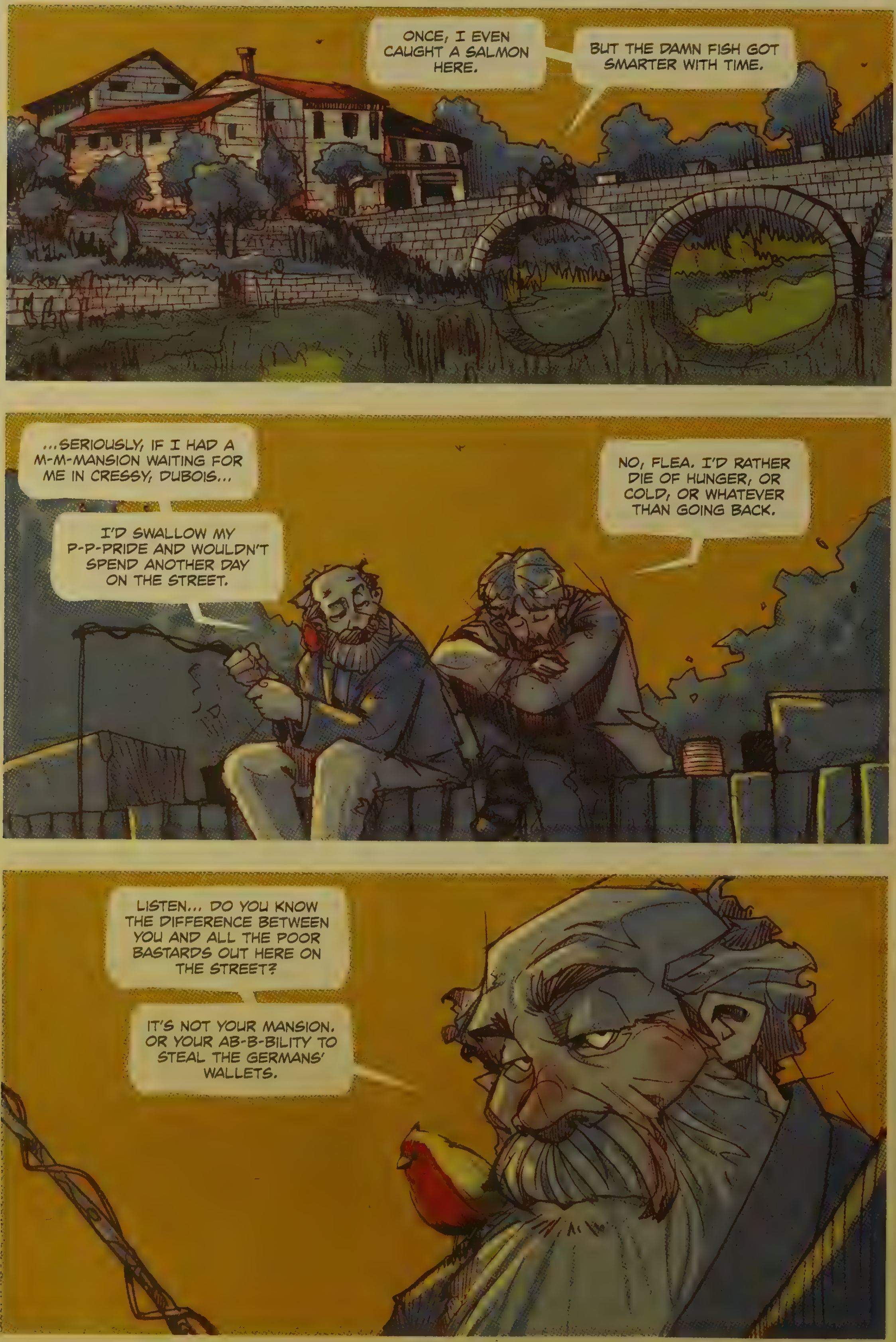

BUT... WHEN YOU'RE USED TO PRACTICING THE PIANO FOR EIGHT HOURS A DAY...
FORGIVE ME, MEIN KOMMANDANT!
ACHTUNG, IDIOT!
...EVERYTHING ELSE SEEMS QUITE EASY TO LEARN.

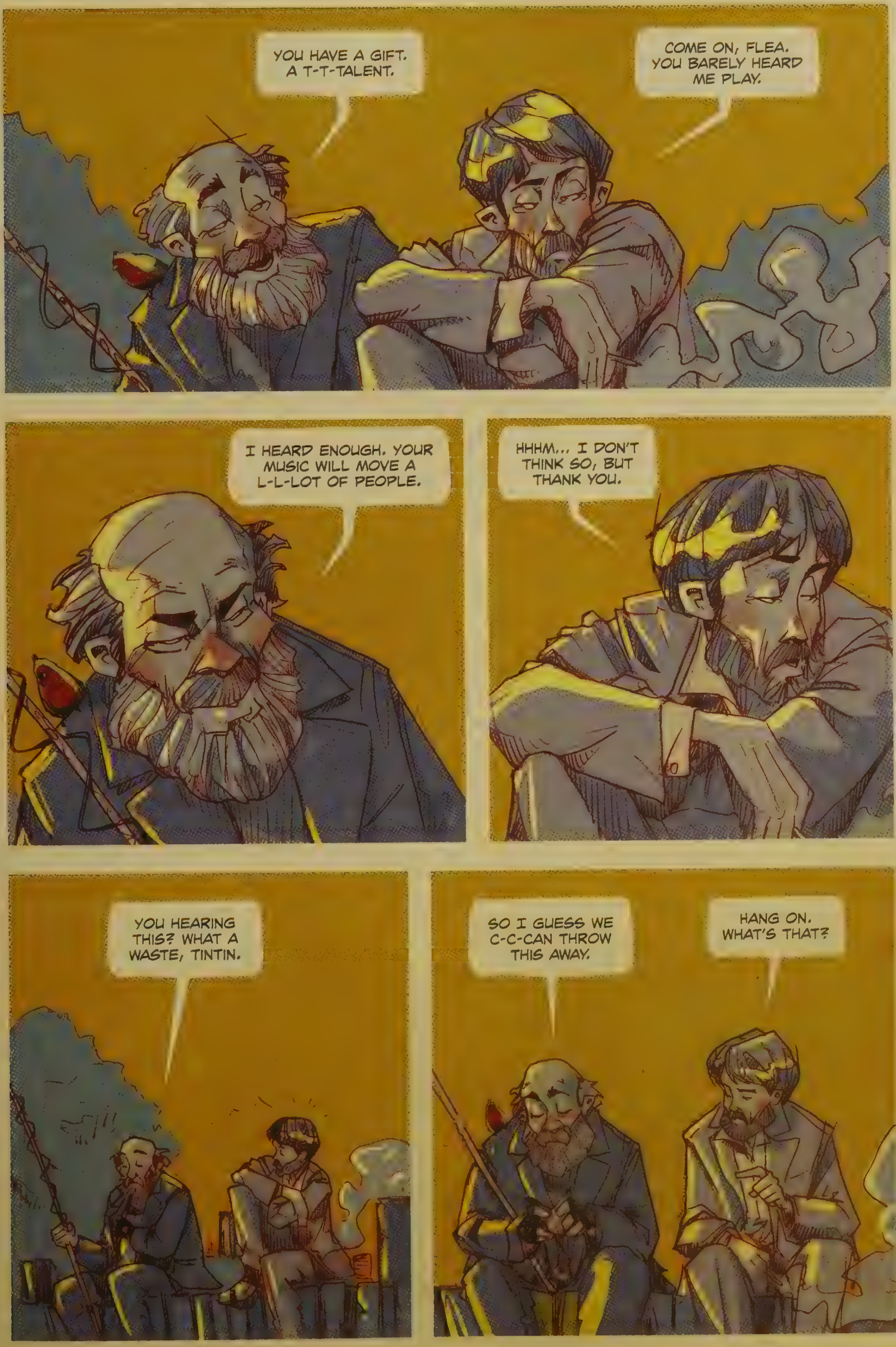

ET *VOILÀ!*
HEY! CHECK THIS OUT!
THERE'S EVEN CIGARETTES!
GIVE THIS MAN A ROUND OF APPLAUSE! OUR HERO OF THE RESISTANCE!

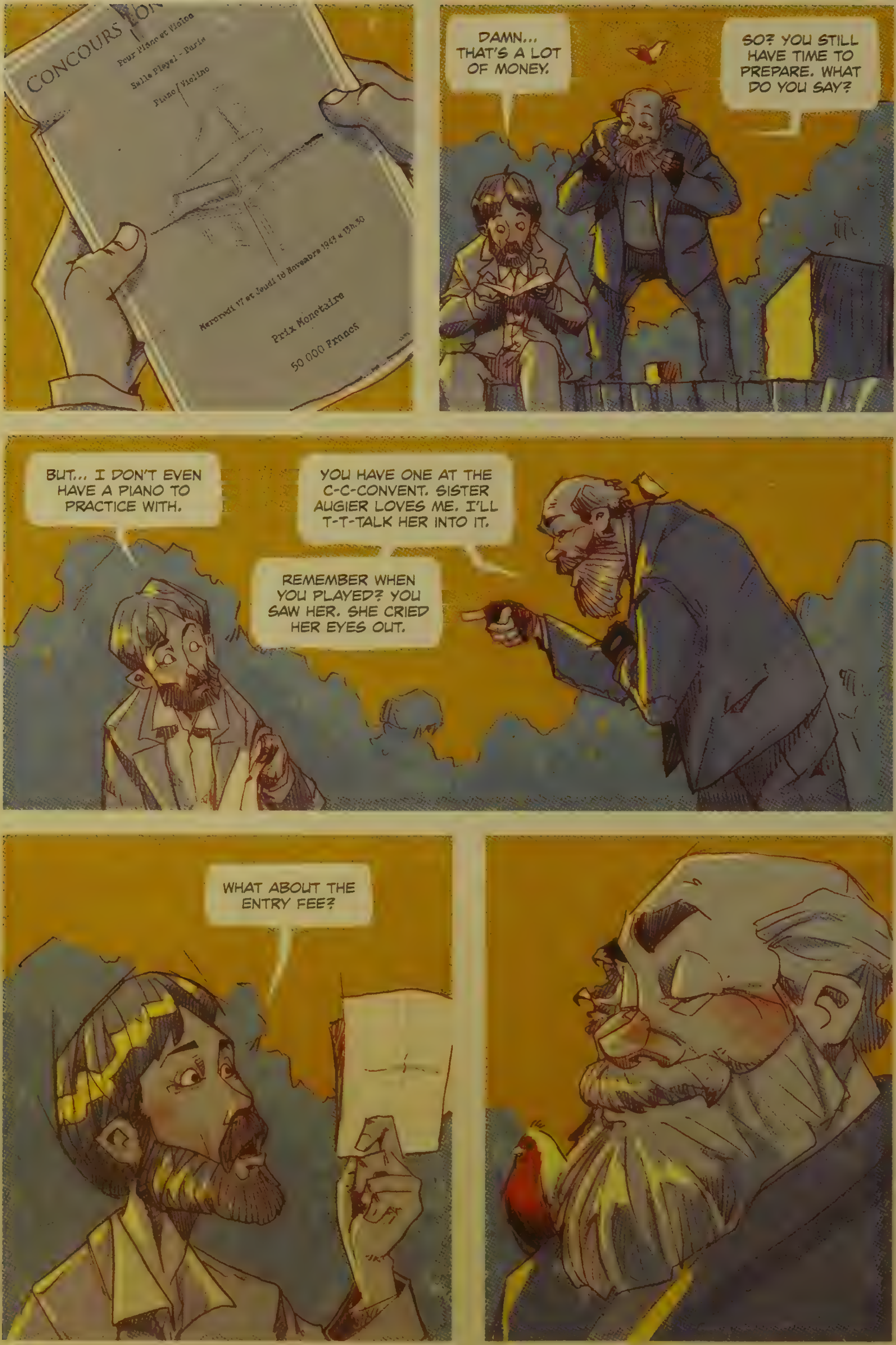

ABSOLUTELY NOT, FLEA.
COME ON, SISTER! IT'S CHRISTMAS, FOR G-G-GOD'S SAKE.
IF MOTHER SUPERIOR FINDS OUT, I'LL NEVER HEAR THE END OF IT.
WELL... ALL RIGHT.
JUST ONE, YOU HEAR ME? AND KEEP IT QUIET.
IT'S ALL YOURS, D-D-DUBOIS.
BUT... I HAVEN'T PRACTICED FOR AGES, FLEA.

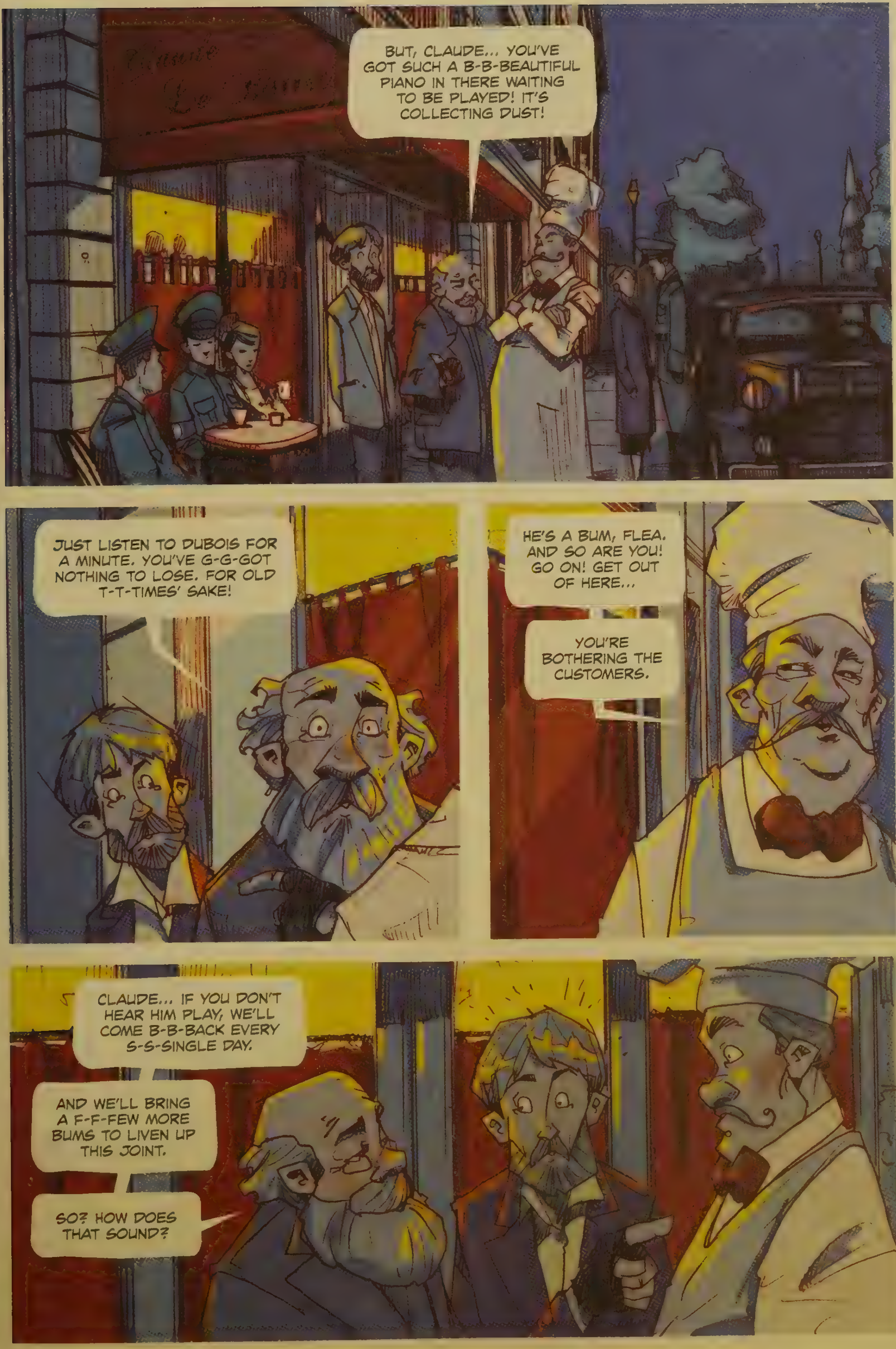

OKAY... FINE.
A SHORT ONE.

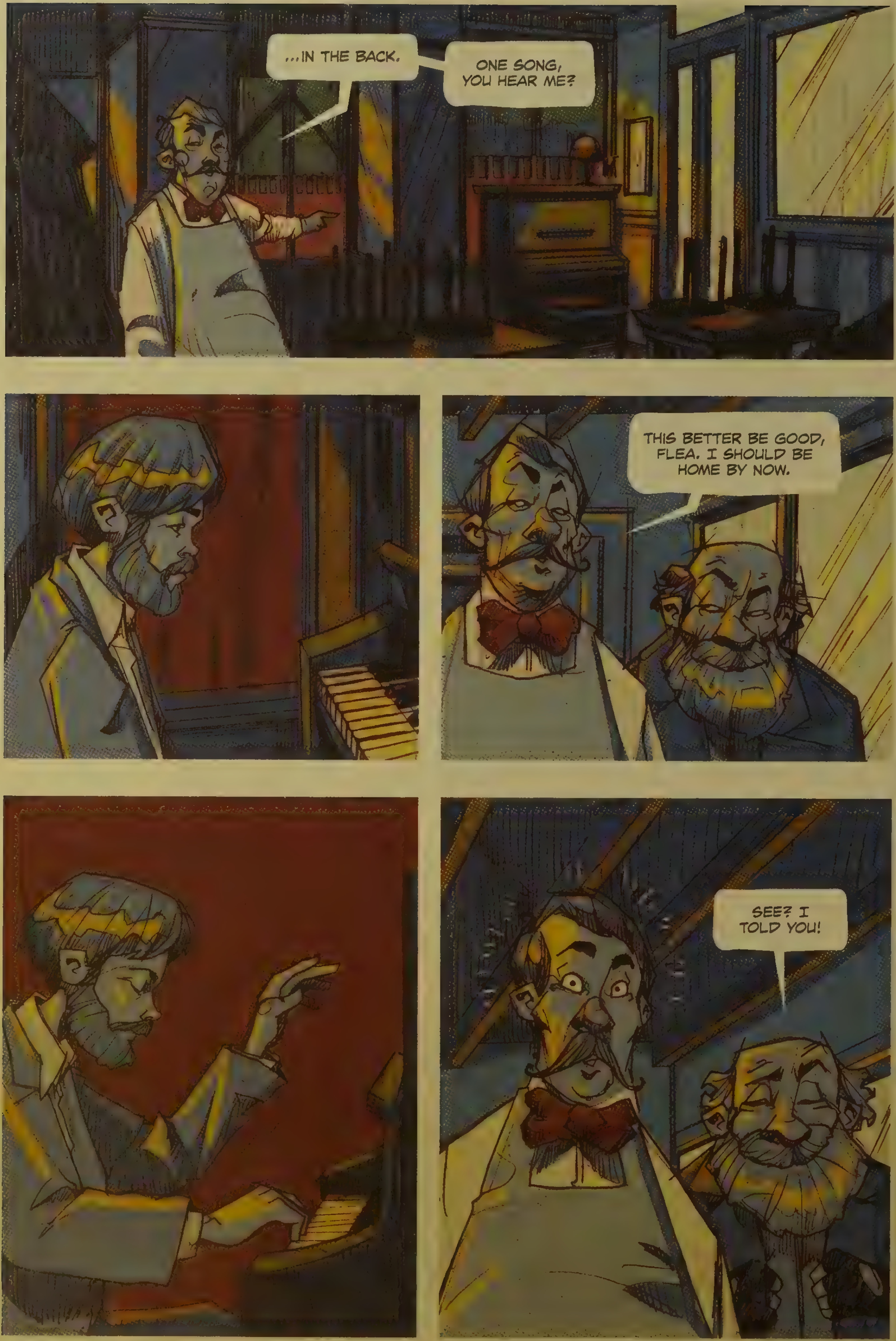


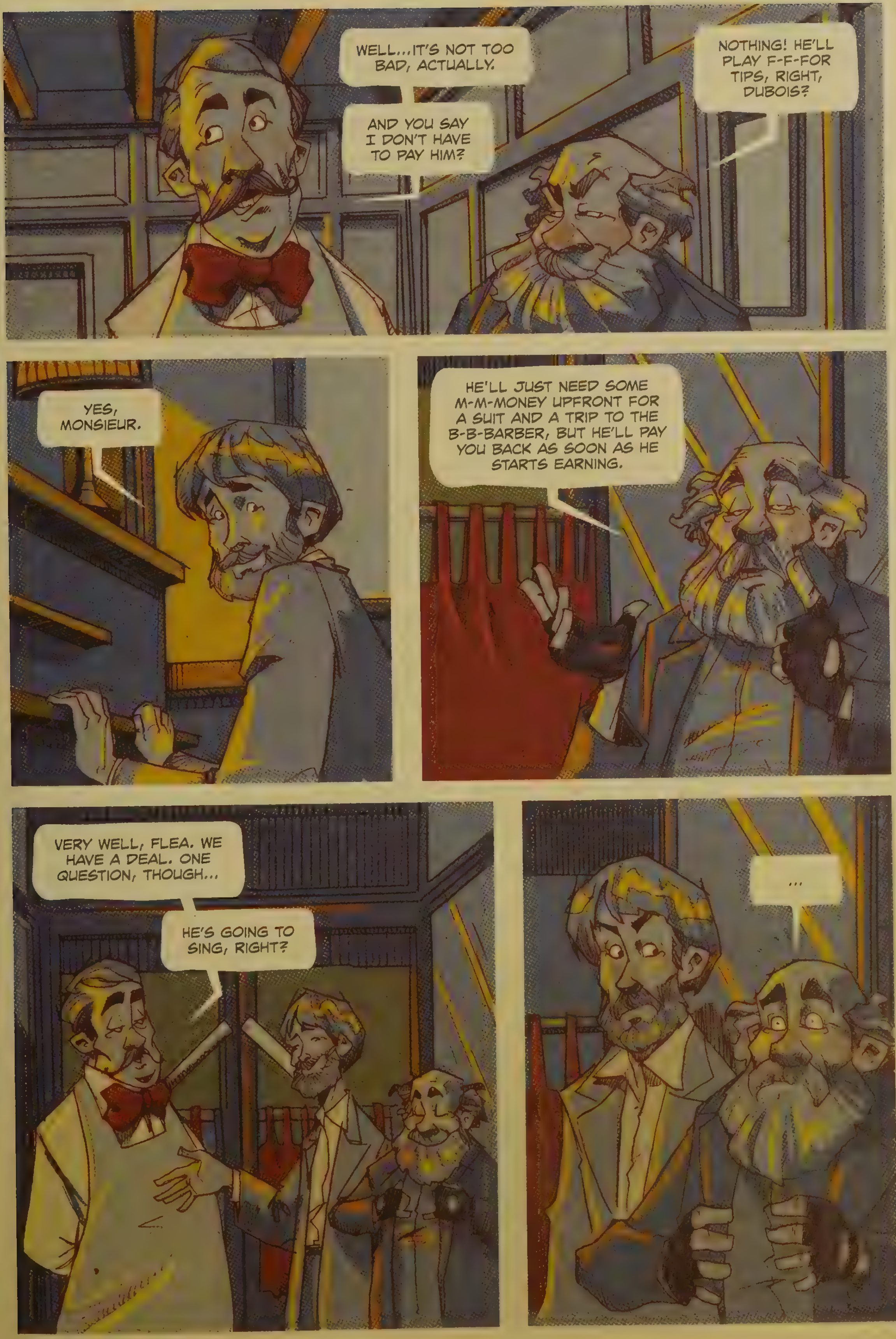

ONCE, I EVEN CAUGHT A SALMON HERE.
BUT THE DAMN FISH GOT SMARTER WITH TIME.
...SERIOUSLY, IF I HAD A M-M-MANSION WAITING FOR ME IN CRESSY, DUBOIS...
I'D SWALLOW MY P-P-PRIDE AND WOULDN'T SPEND ANOTHER DAY ON THE STREET.
NO, FLEA. I'D RATHER DIE OF HUNGER, OR COLD, OR WHATEVER THAN GOING BACK.
LISTEN... DO YOU KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YOU AND ALL THE POOR BASTARDS OUT HERE ON THE STREET?
IT'S NOT YOUR MANSION. OR YOUR AB-B-BILITY TO STEAL THE GERMANS' WALLETS.

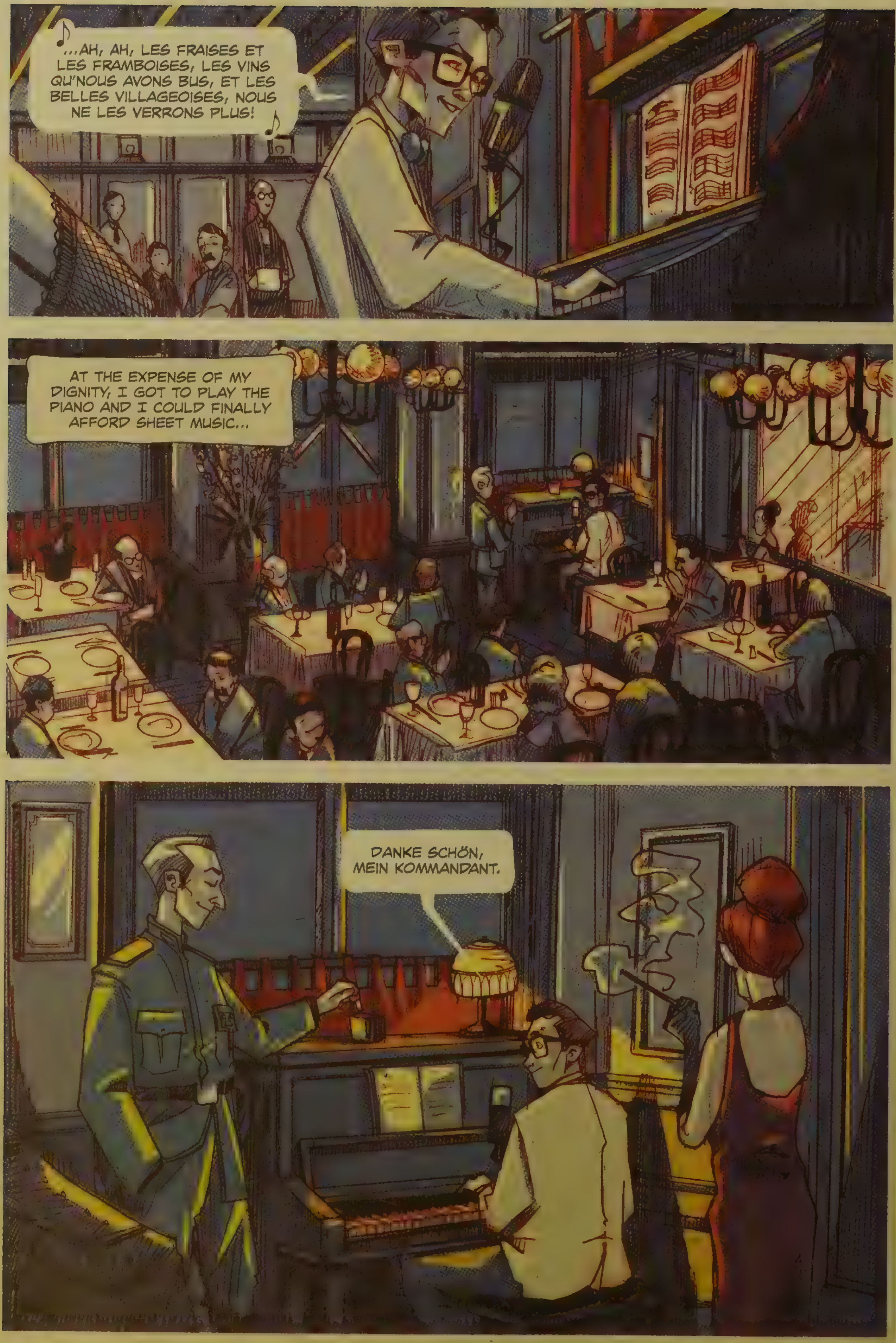

YOU HAVE A GIFT. A T-T-TALENT.
COME ON, FLEA. YOU BARELY HEARD ME PLAY.
I HEARD ENOUGH. YOUR MUSIC WILL MOVE A L-L-LOT OF PEOPLE.
HHHM... I DON'T THINK SO, BUT THANK YOU.
YOU HEARING THIS? WHAT A WASTE, TINTIN.
SO I GUESS WE C-C-CAN THROW THIS AWAY.
HANG ON. WHAT'S THAT?

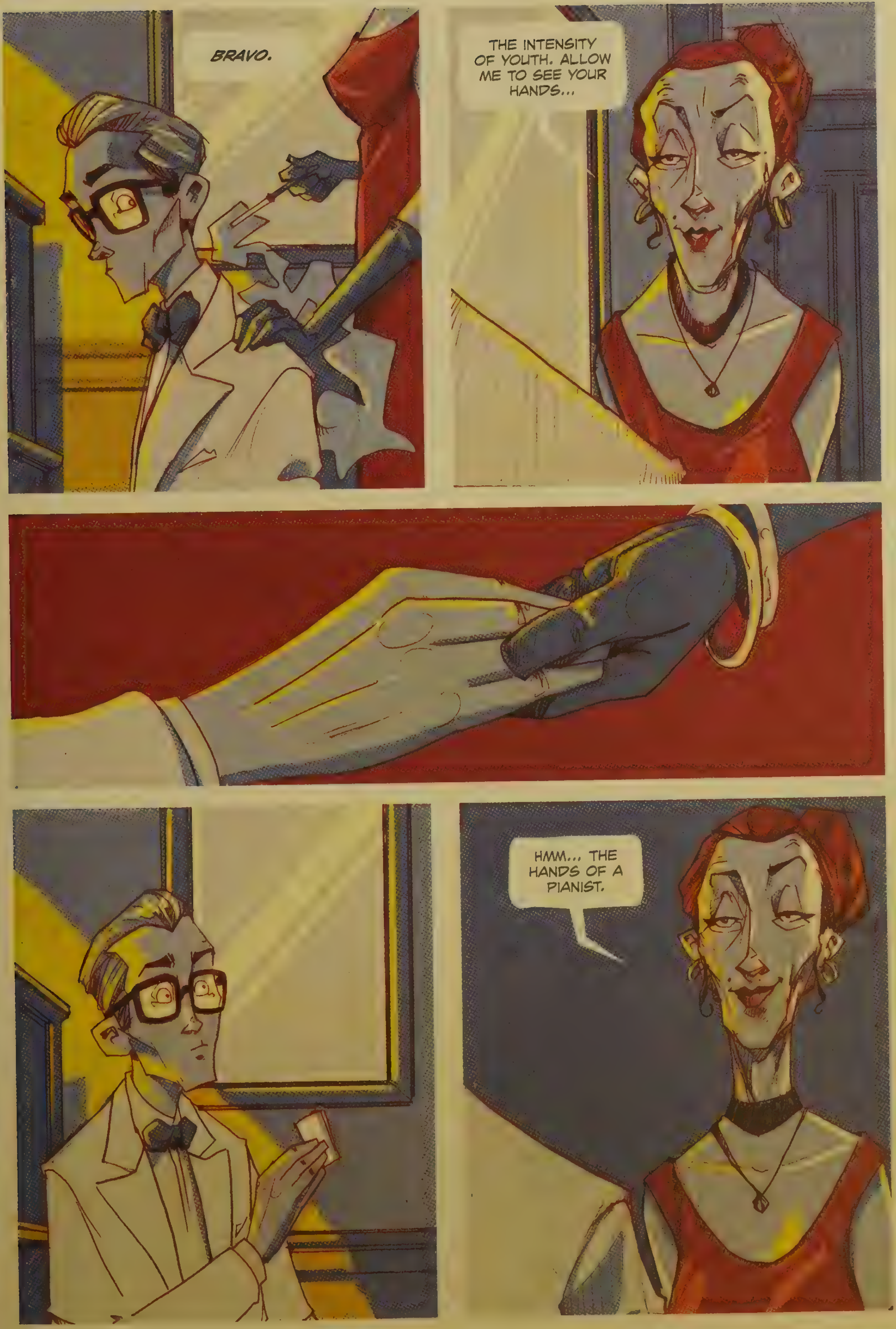

CONCOURS LON
Pour Piano et Violon
Salle Pleyel - Paris
Piano / Violino
Mercredi 17 et Jeudi 18 Novembre 1943 à 13h.30
Prix Monetaire
50 000 Francs
DAMN... THAT'S A LOT OF MONEY.
SO? YOU STILL HAVE TIME TO PREPARE. WHAT DO YOU SAY?
BUT... I DON'T EVEN HAVE A PIANO TO PRACTICE WITH.
YOU HAVE ONE AT THE C-C-CONVENT. SISTER AUGIER LOVES ME. I'LL T-T-TALK HER INTO IT.
REMEMBER WHEN YOU PLAYED? YOU SAW HER. SHE CRIED HER EYES OUT.
WHAT ABOUT THE ENTRY FEE?

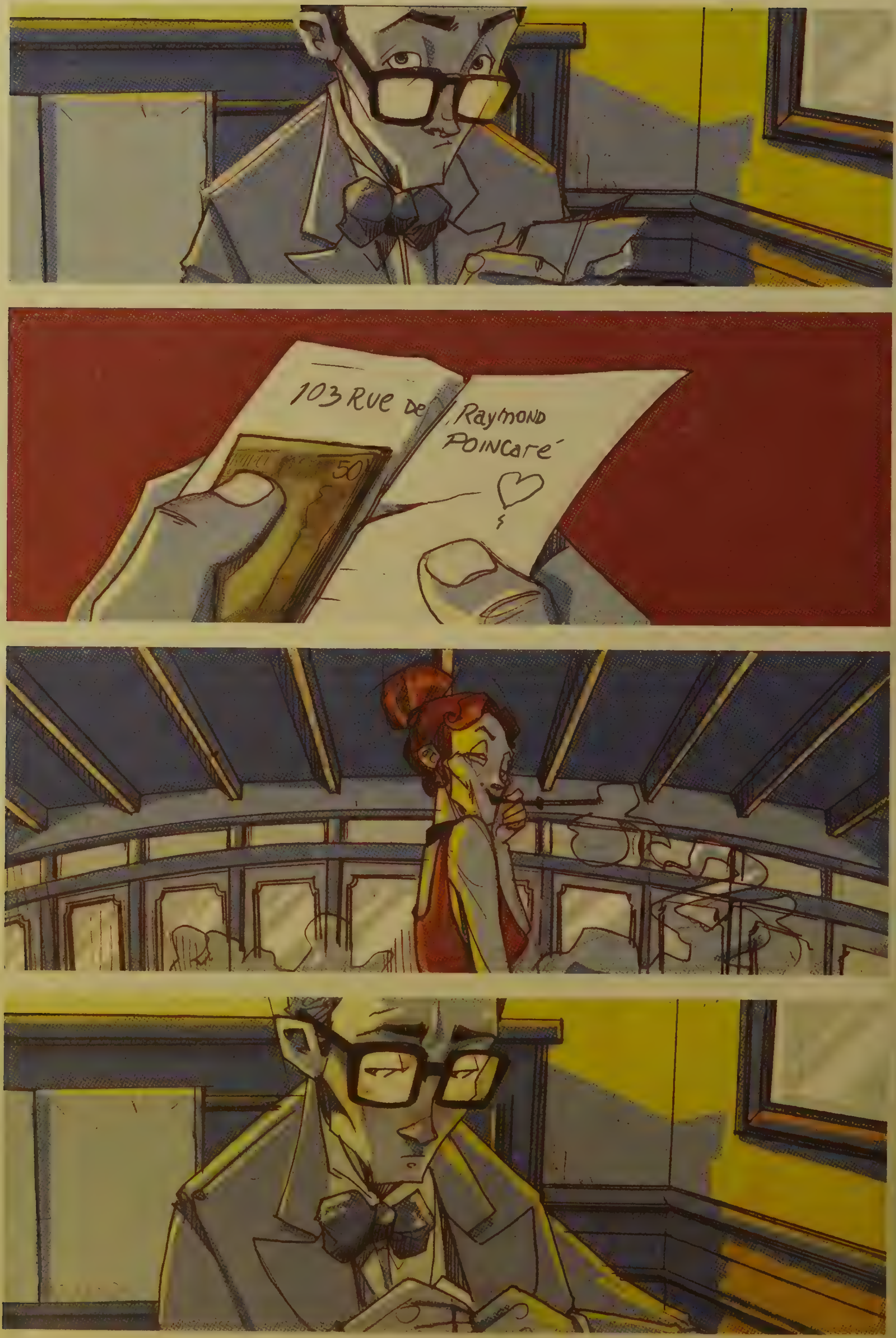

BUT, CLAUDE... YOU'VE GOT SUCH A B-B-BEAUTIFUL PIANO IN THERE WAITING TO BE PLAYED! IT'S COLLECTING DUST!
JUST LISTEN TO DUBOIS FOR A MINUTE. YOU'VE G-G-GOT NOTHING TO LOSE. FOR OLD T-T-TIMES' SAKE!
HE'S A BUM, FLEA. AND SO ARE YOU! GO ON! GET OUT OF HERE...
YOU'RE BOTHERING THE CUSTOMERS.
CLAUDE... IF YOU DON'T HEAR HIM PLAY, WE'LL COME B-B-BACK EVERY S-S-SINGLE DAY.
AND WE'LL BRING A F-F-FEW MORE BUMS TO LIVEN UP THIS JOINT.
SO? HOW DOES THAT SOUND?


...IN THE BACK.
ONE SONG, YOU HEAR ME?
THIS BETTER BE GOOD, FLEA. I SHOULD BE HOME BY NOW.
SEE? I TOLD YOU!


WELL...IT'S NOT TOO BAD, ACTUALLY.
AND YOU SAY I DON'T HAVE TO PAY HIM?
NOTHING! HE'LL PLAY F-F-FOR TIPS, RIGHT, DUBOIS?
YES, MONSIEUR.
HE'LL JUST NEED SOME M-M-MONEY UPFRONT FOR A SUIT AND A TRIP TO THE B-B-BARBER, BUT HE'LL PAY YOU BACK AS SOON AS HE STARTS EARNING.
VERY WELL, FLEA. WE HAVE A DEAL. ONE QUESTION, THOUGH...
HE'S GOING TO SING, RIGHT?
...


♪ ...AH, AH, LES FRAISES ET LES FRAMBOISES, LES VINS QU'NOUS AVONS BUS, ET LES BELLES VILLAGEOISES, NOUS NE LES VERRONS PLUS! ♪
AT THE EXPENSE OF MY DIGNITY, I GOT TO PLAY THE PIANO AND I COULD FINALLY AFFORD SHEET MUSIC...
DANKE SCHÖN, MEIN KOMMANDANT.


BRAVO.
THE INTENSITY OF YOUTH. ALLOW ME TO SEE YOUR HANDS...
HMM... THE HANDS OF A PIANIST.


103 Rue de Raymond Poincaré
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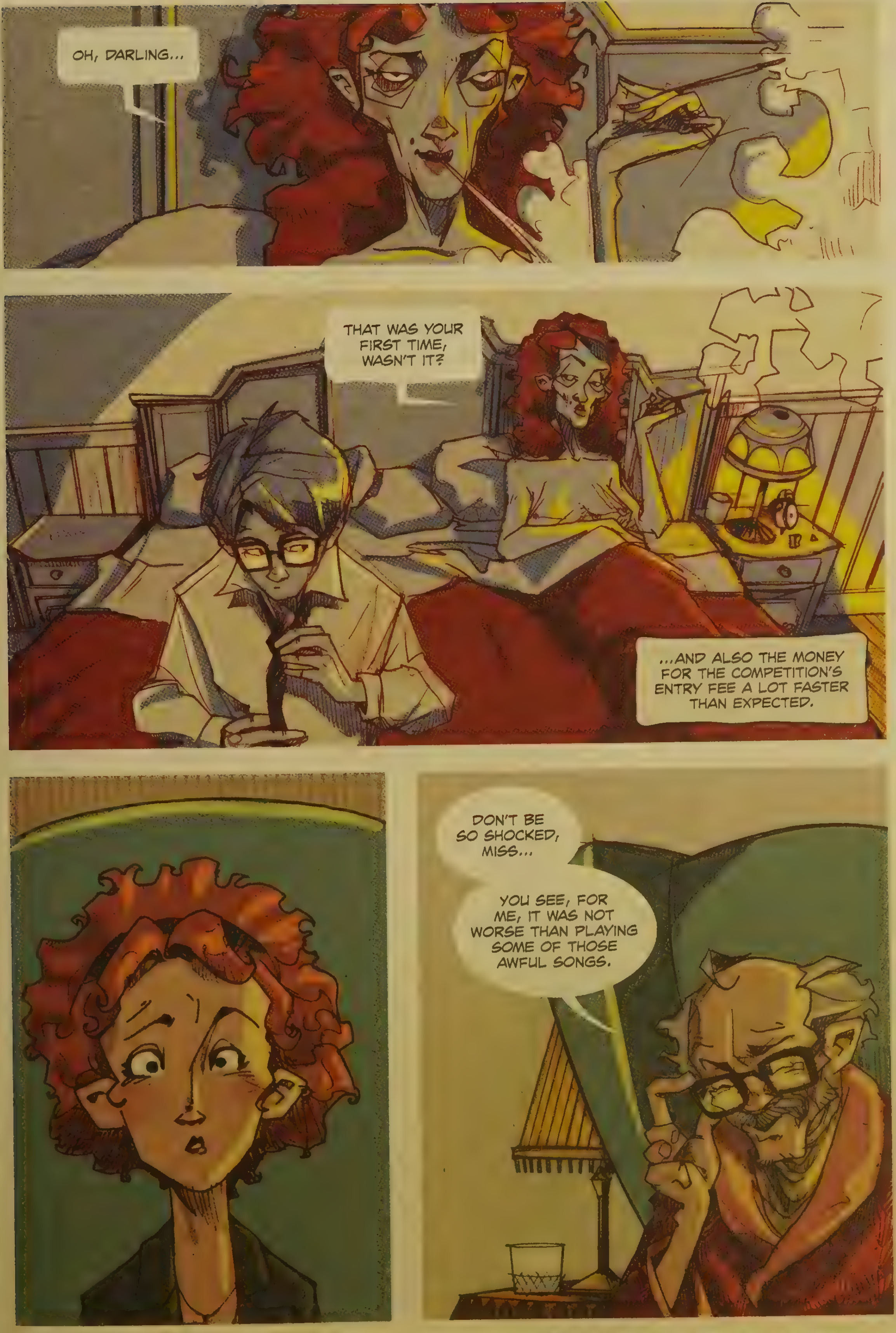
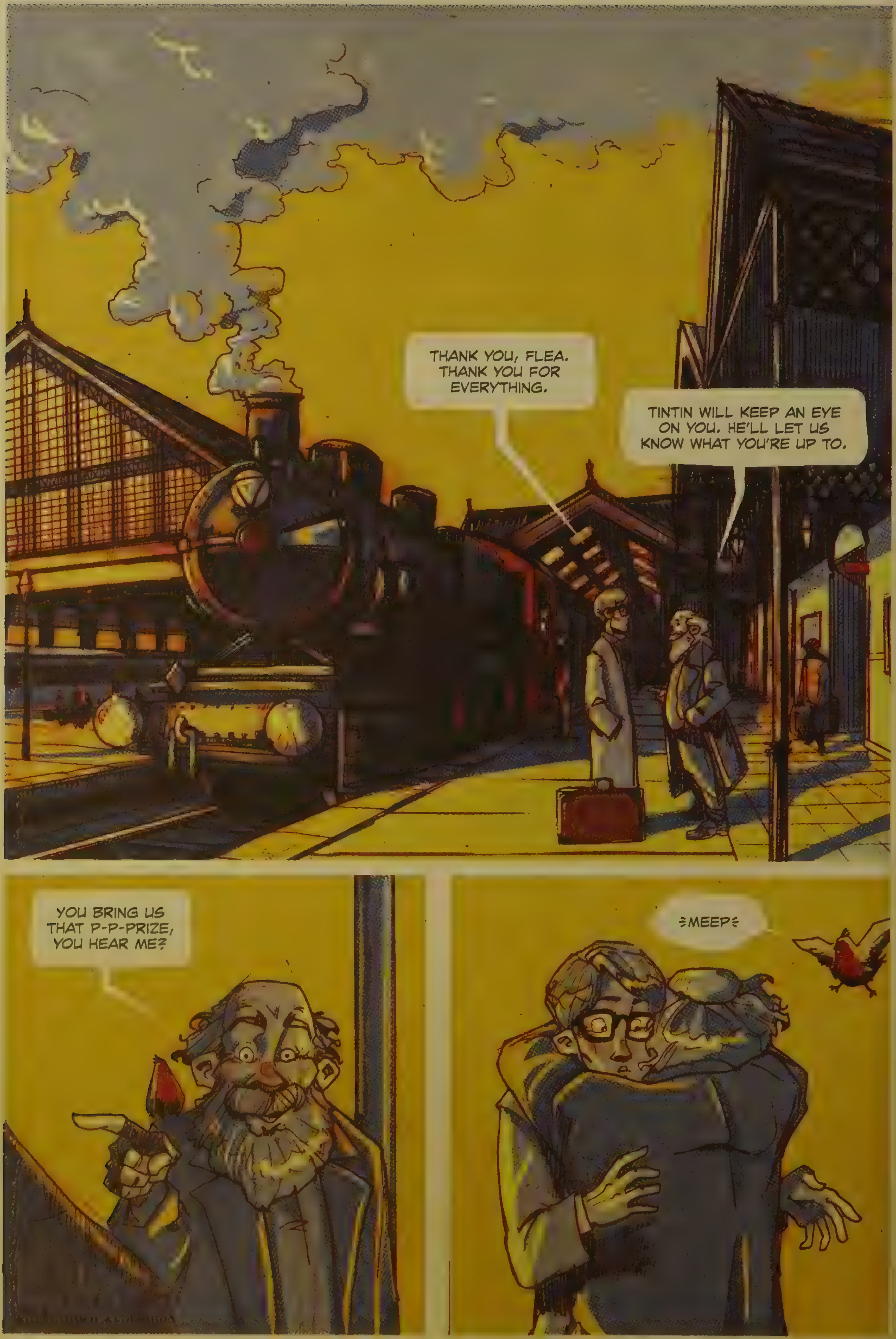
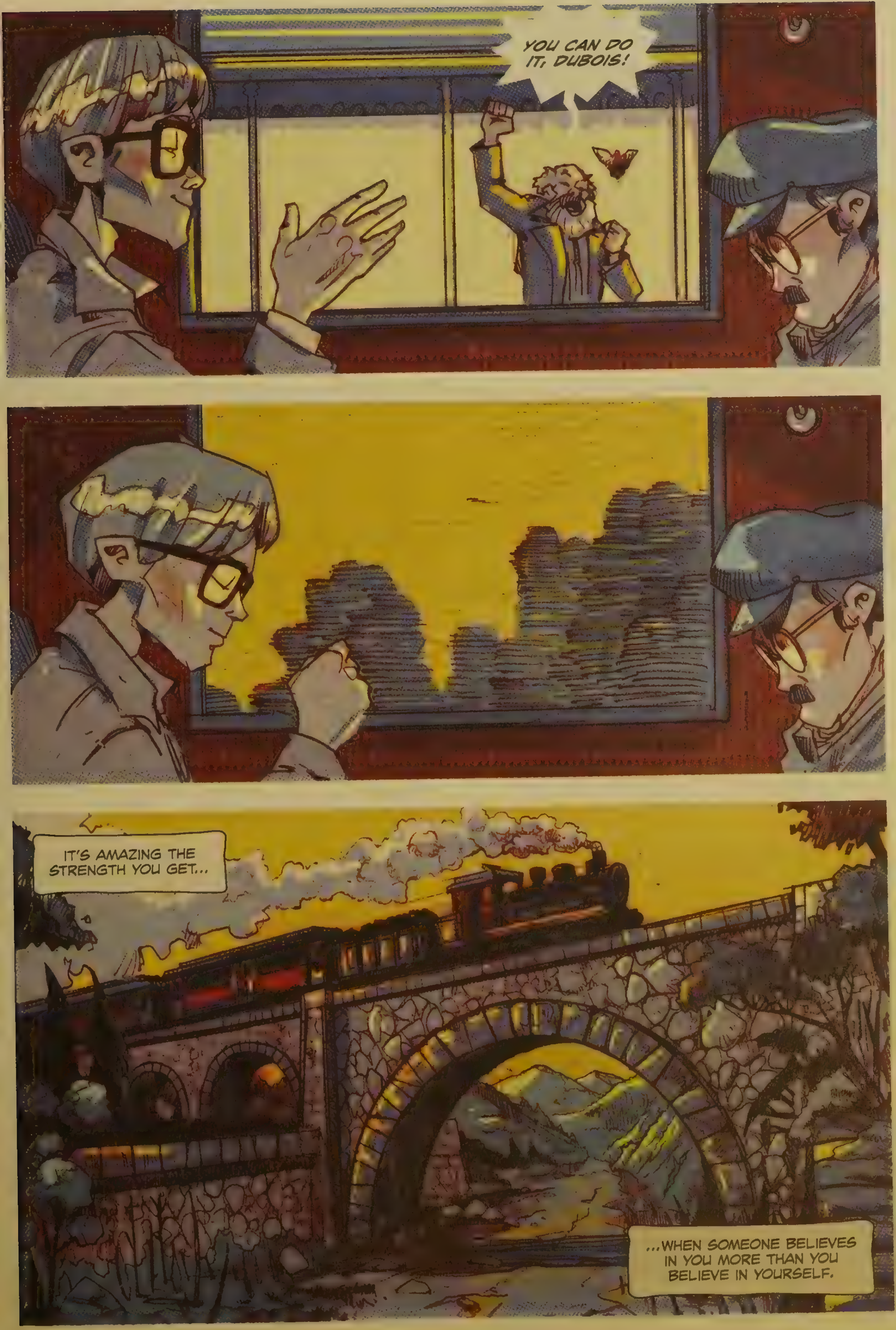
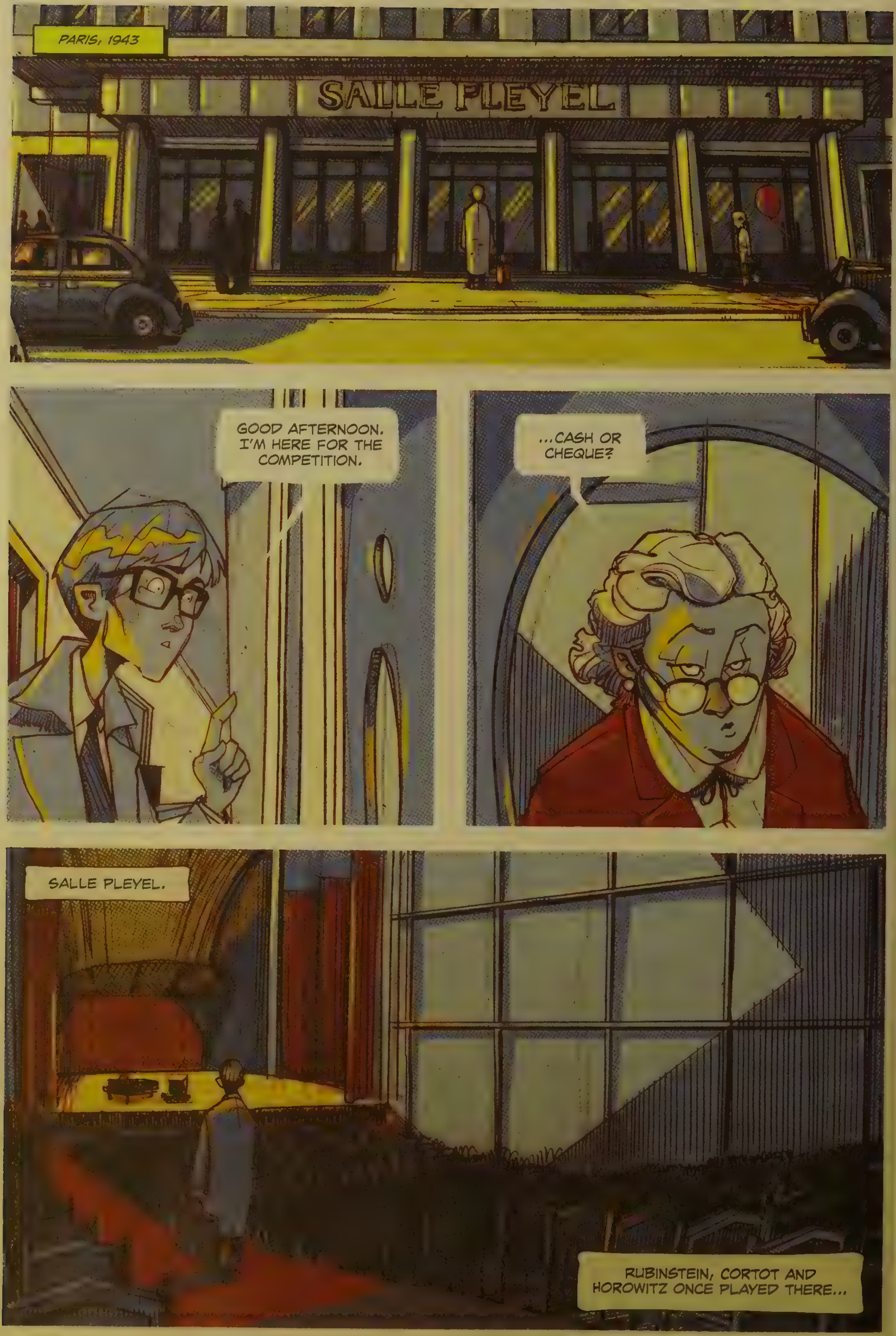
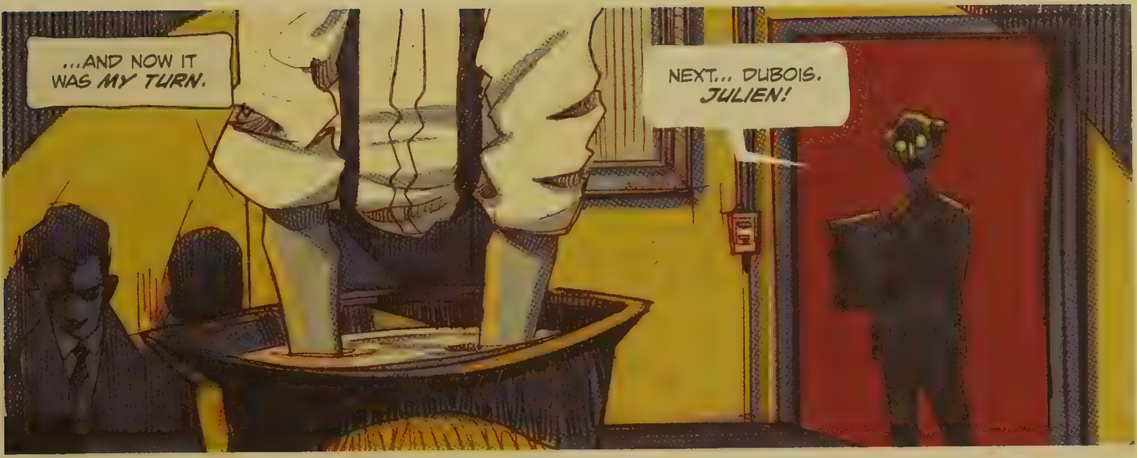

OH, DARLING...
THAT WAS YOUR FIRST TIME, WASN'T IT?
...AND ALSO THE MONEY FOR THE COMPETITION'S ENTRY FEE A LOT FASTER THAN EXPECTED.
DON'T BE SO SHOCKED, MISS...
YOU SEE, FOR ME, IT WAS NOT WORSE THAN PLAYING SOME OF THOSE AWFUL SONGS.

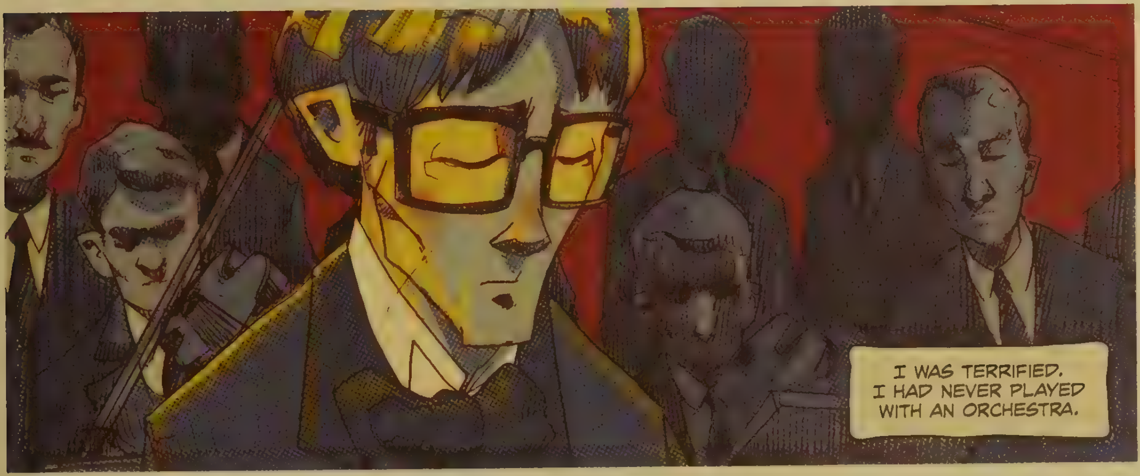
THREE RIVERS PUBLIC LIBRARY

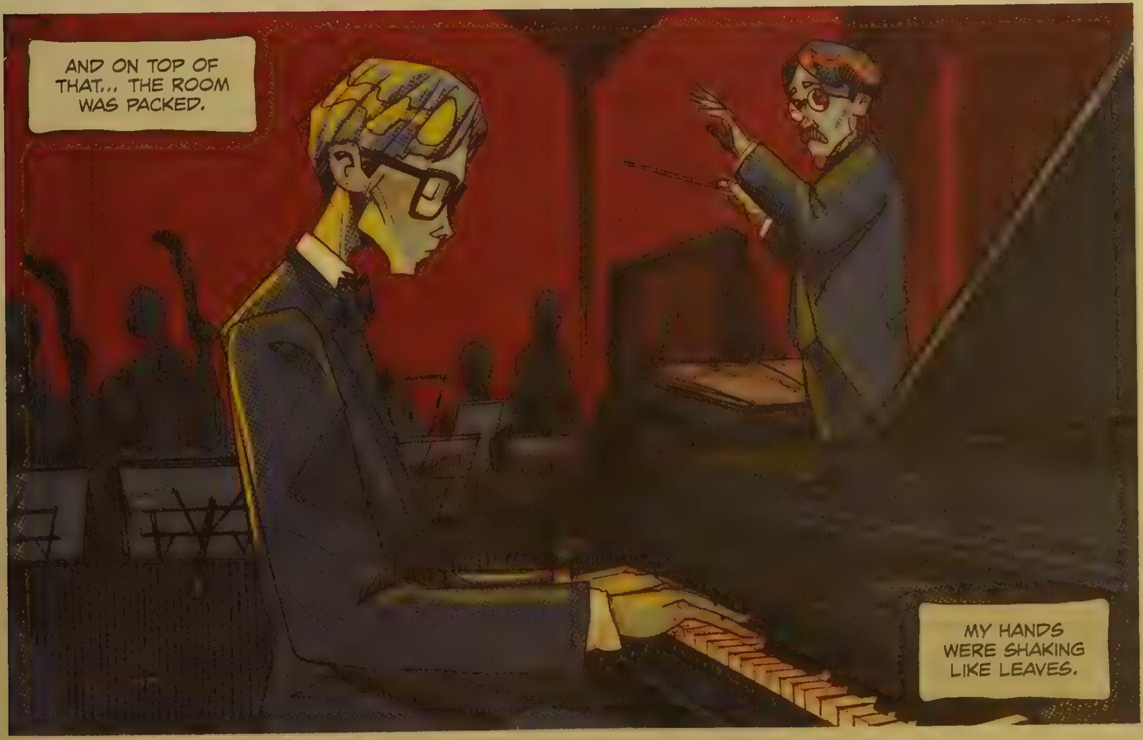

THANK YOU, FLEA. THANK YOU FOR EVERYTHING.
TINTIN WILL KEEP AN EYE ON YOU. HE'LL LET US KNOW WHAT YOU'RE UP TO.
YOU BRING US THAT P-P-PRIZE, YOU HEAR ME?
≑MEEP≑

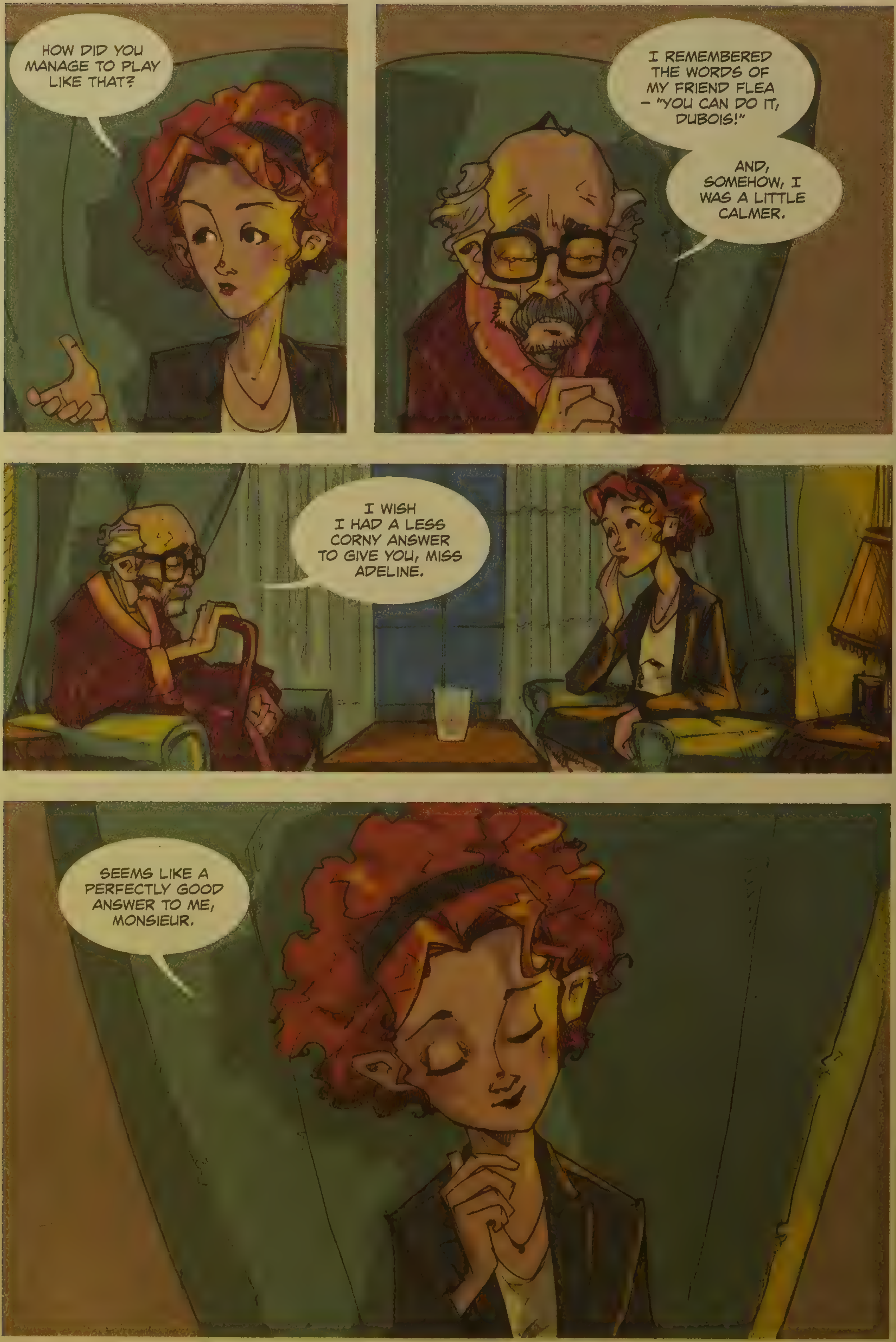

YOU CAN DO IT, DUBOIS!
IT'S AMAZING THE STRENGTH YOU GET...
...WHEN SOMEONE BELIEVES IN YOU MORE THAN YOU BELIEVE IN YOURSELF.

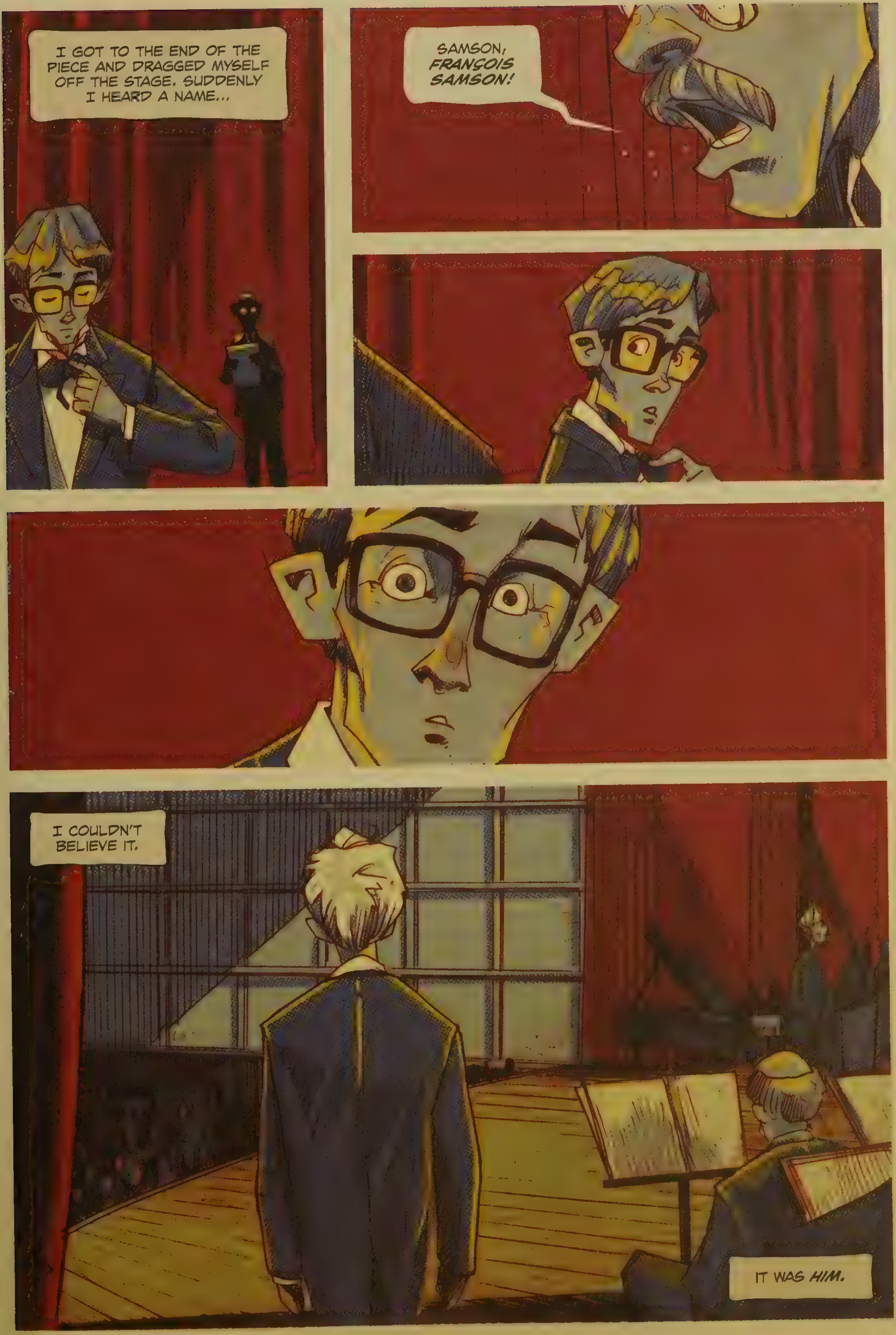

PARIS, 1943
SALLE PLEYEL
GOOD AFTERNOON. I'M HERE FOR THE COMPETITION.
...CASH OR CHEQUE?
SALLE PLEYEL.
RUBINSTEIN, CORTOT AND HOROWITZ ONCE PLAYED THERE...

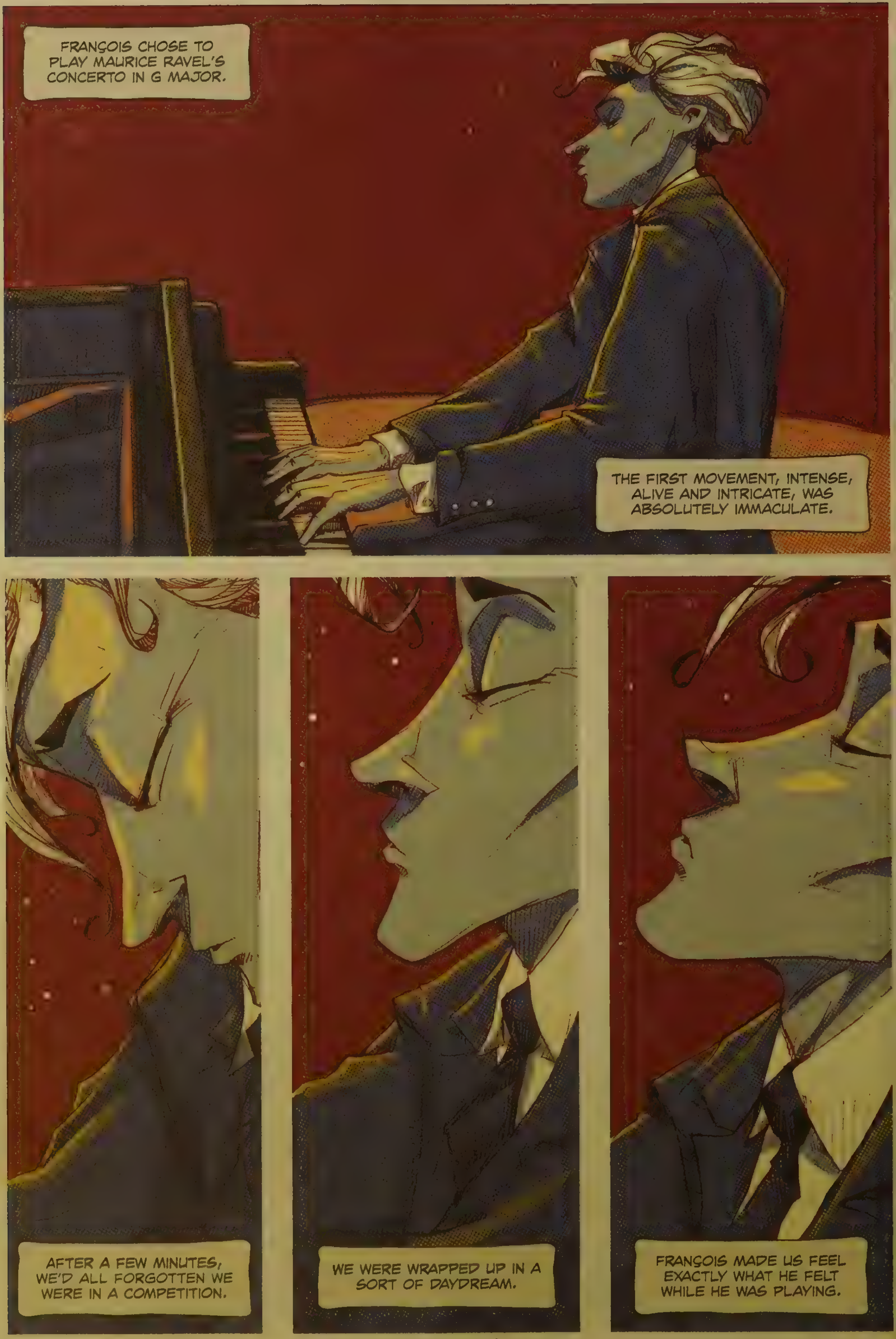

...AND NOW IT WAS *MY TURN.*
NEXT... DUBOIS. *JULIEN!*

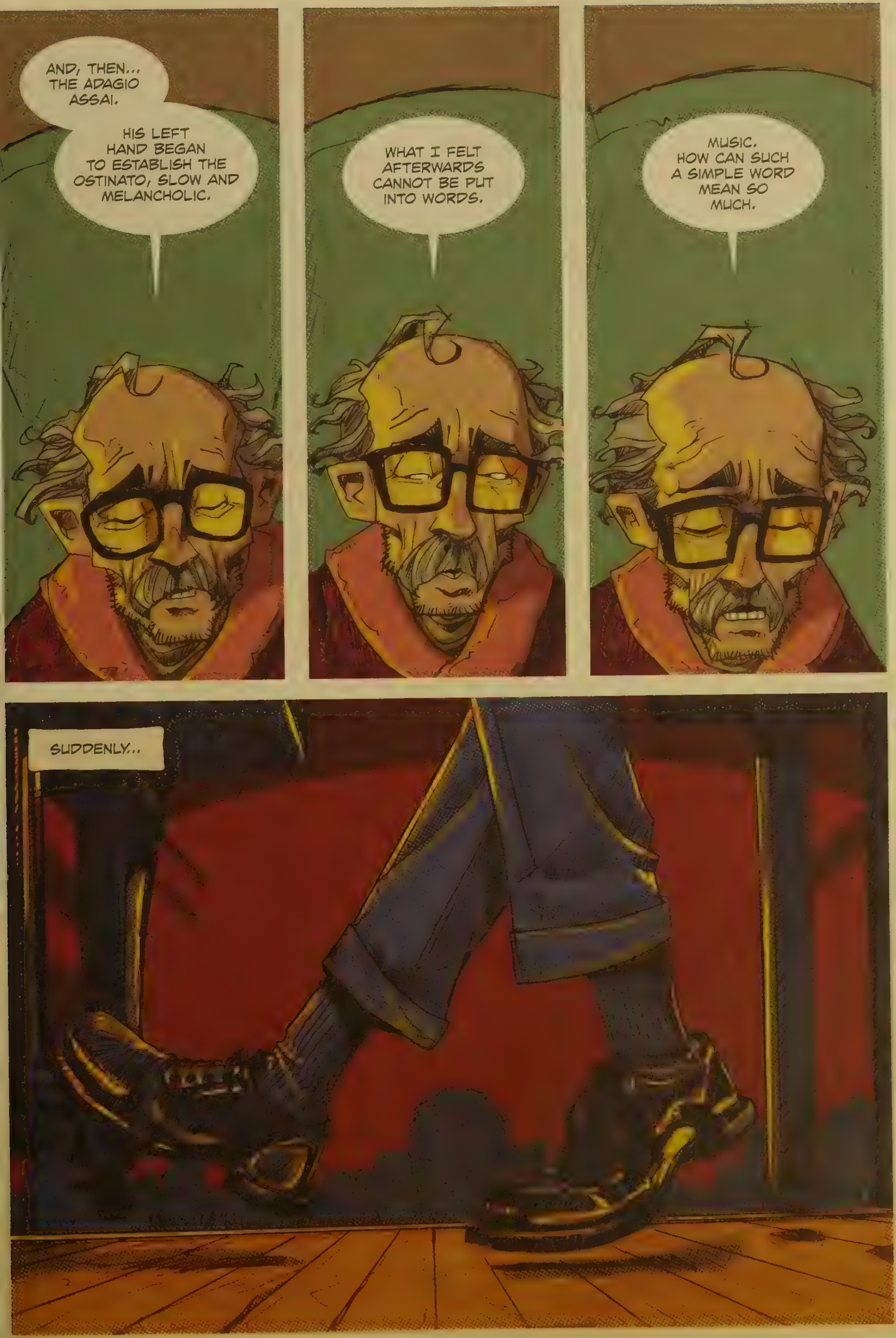

I WAS TERRIFIED. I HAD NEVER PLAYED WITH AN ORCHESTRA.

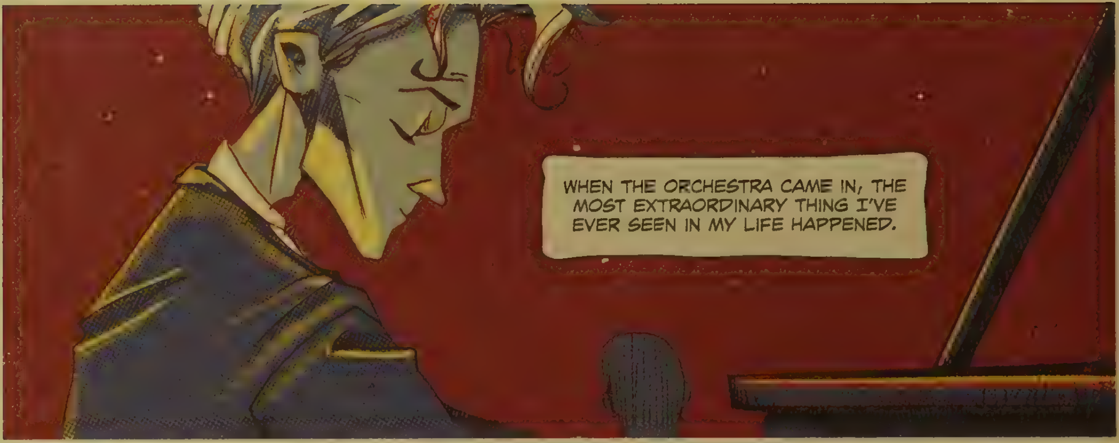

AND ON TOP OF THAT... THE ROOM WAS PACKED.
MY HANDS WERE SHAKING LIKE LEAVES.

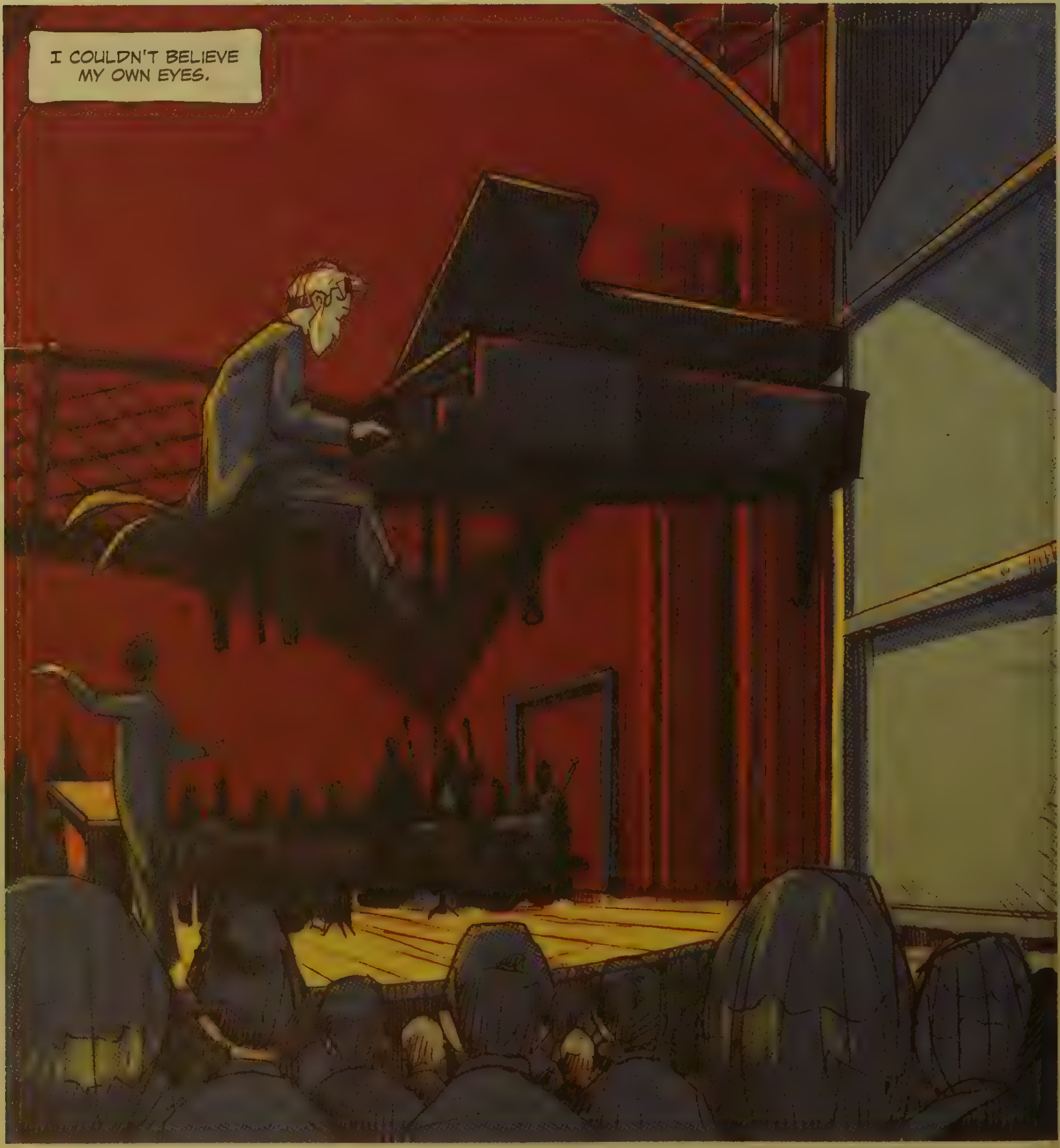

HOW DID YOU MANAGE TO PLAY LIKE THAT?
I REMEMBERED THE WORDS OF MY FRIEND FLEA – "YOU CAN DO IT, DUBOIS!"
AND, SOMEHOW, I WAS A LITTLE CALMER.
I WISH I HAD A LESS CORNY ANSWER TO GIVE YOU, MISS ADELINE.
SEEMS LIKE A PERFECTLY GOOD ANSWER TO ME, MONSIEUR.

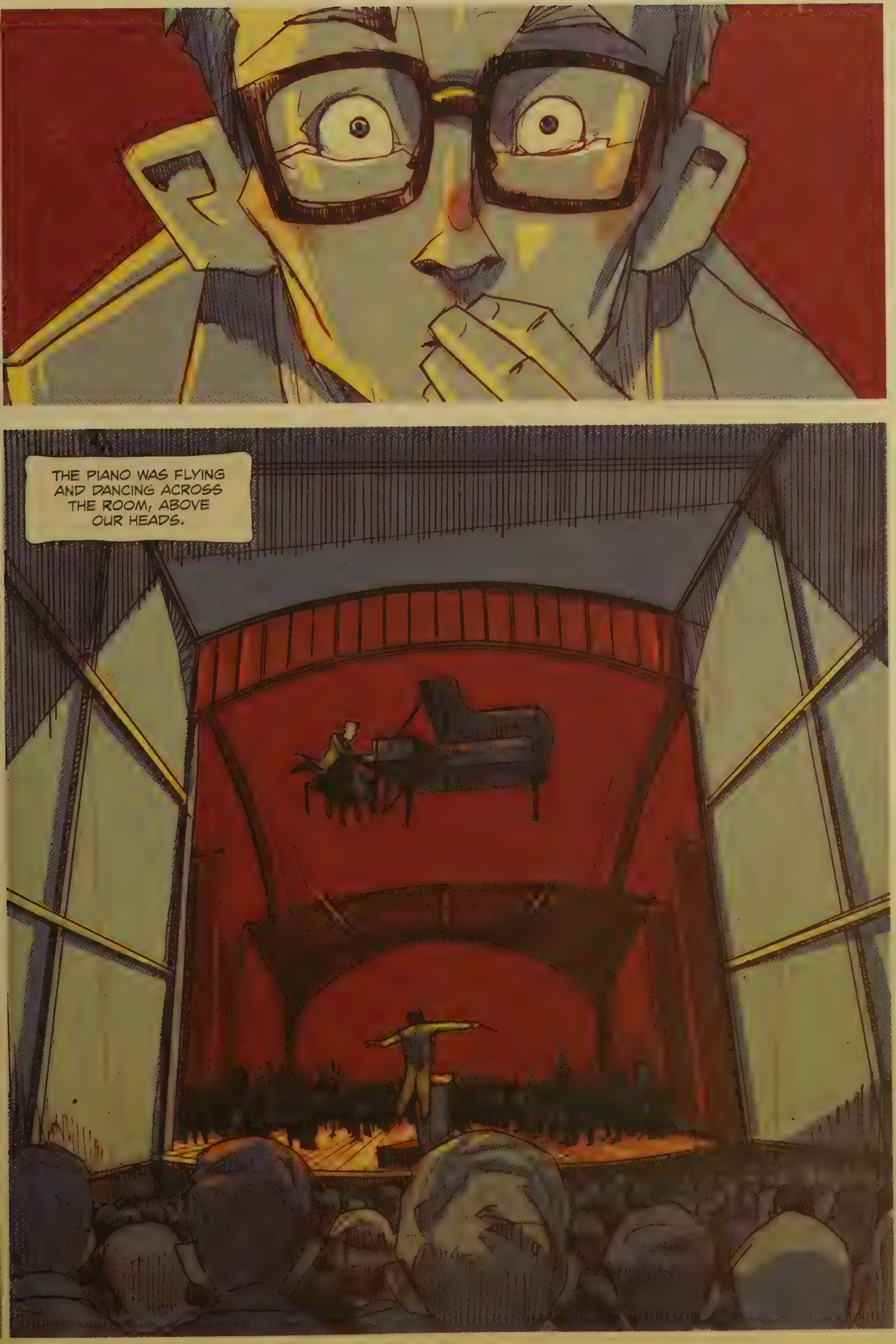

I GOT TO THE END OF THE PIECE AND DRAGGED MYSELF OFF THE STAGE. SUDDENLY I HEARD A NAME...
SAMSON, *FRANÇOIS SAMSON!*
I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT.
IT WAS *HIM.*

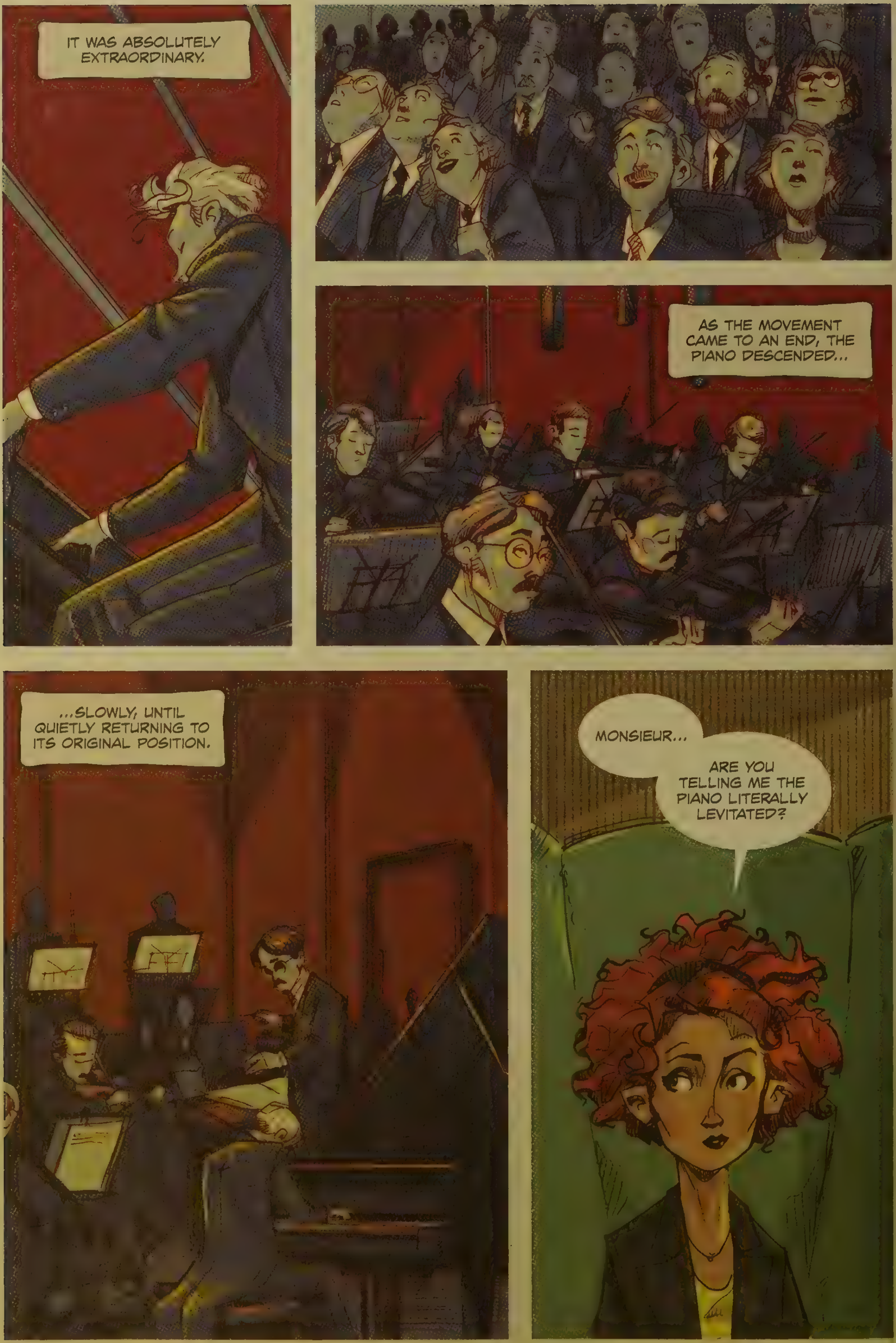

FRANÇOIS CHOSE TO PLAY MAURICE RAVEL'S CONCERTO IN G MAJOR.
THE FIRST MOVEMENT, INTENSE, ALIVE AND INTRICATE, WAS ABSOLUTELY IMMACULATE.
AFTER A FEW MINUTES, WE'D ALL FORGOTTEN WE WERE IN A COMPETITION.
WE WERE WRAPPED UP IN A SORT OF DAYDREAM.
FRANÇOIS MADE US FEEL EXACTLY WHAT HE FELT WHILE HE WAS PLAYING.

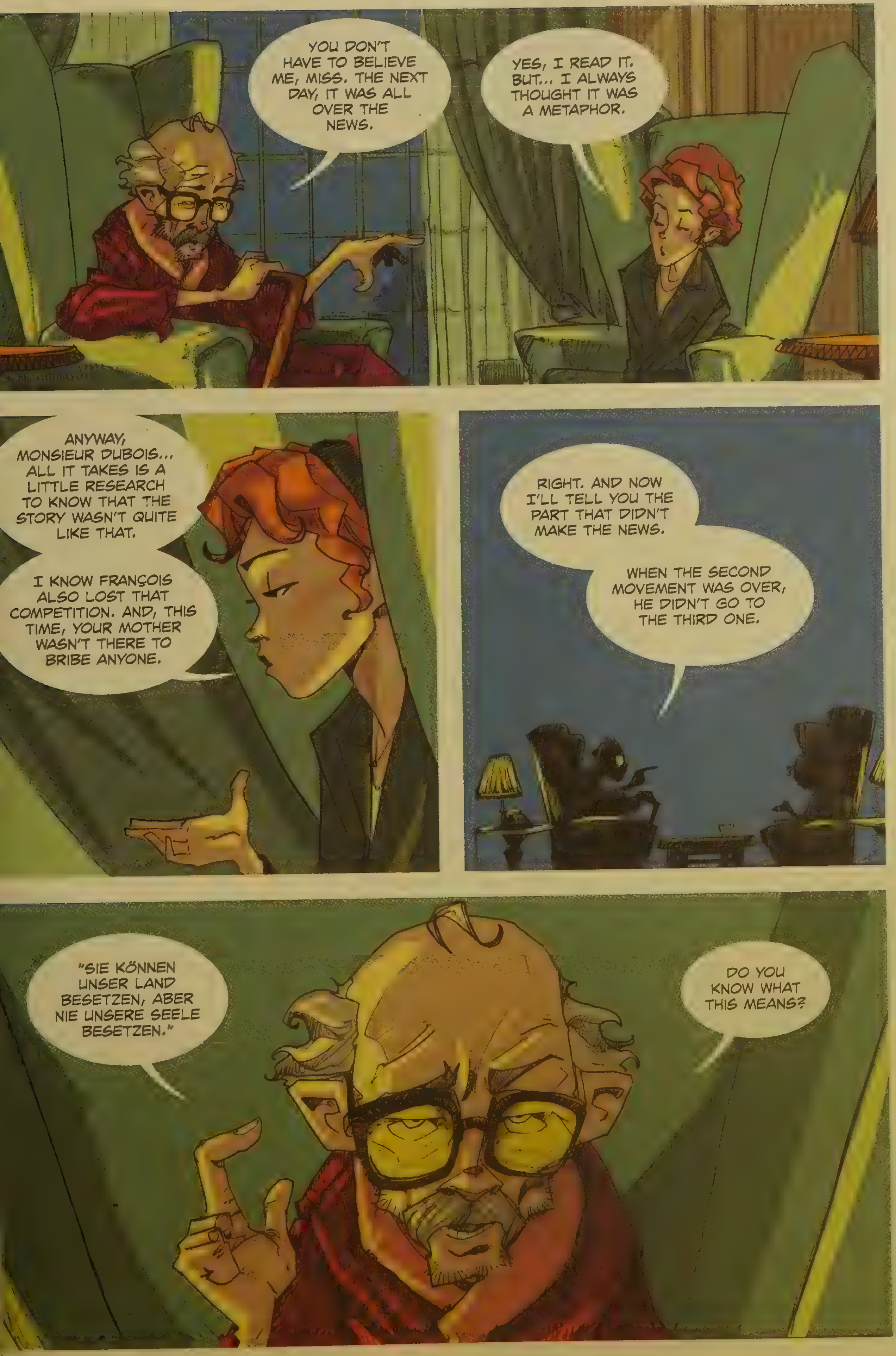

AND, THEN... THE ADAGIO ASSAI.
HIS LEFT HAND BEGAN TO ESTABLISH THE OSTINATO, SLOW AND MELANCHOLIC.
WHAT I FELT AFTERWARDS CANNOT BE PUT INTO WORDS.
MUSIC. HOW CAN SUCH A SIMPLE WORD MEAN SO MUCH.
SUDDENLY...

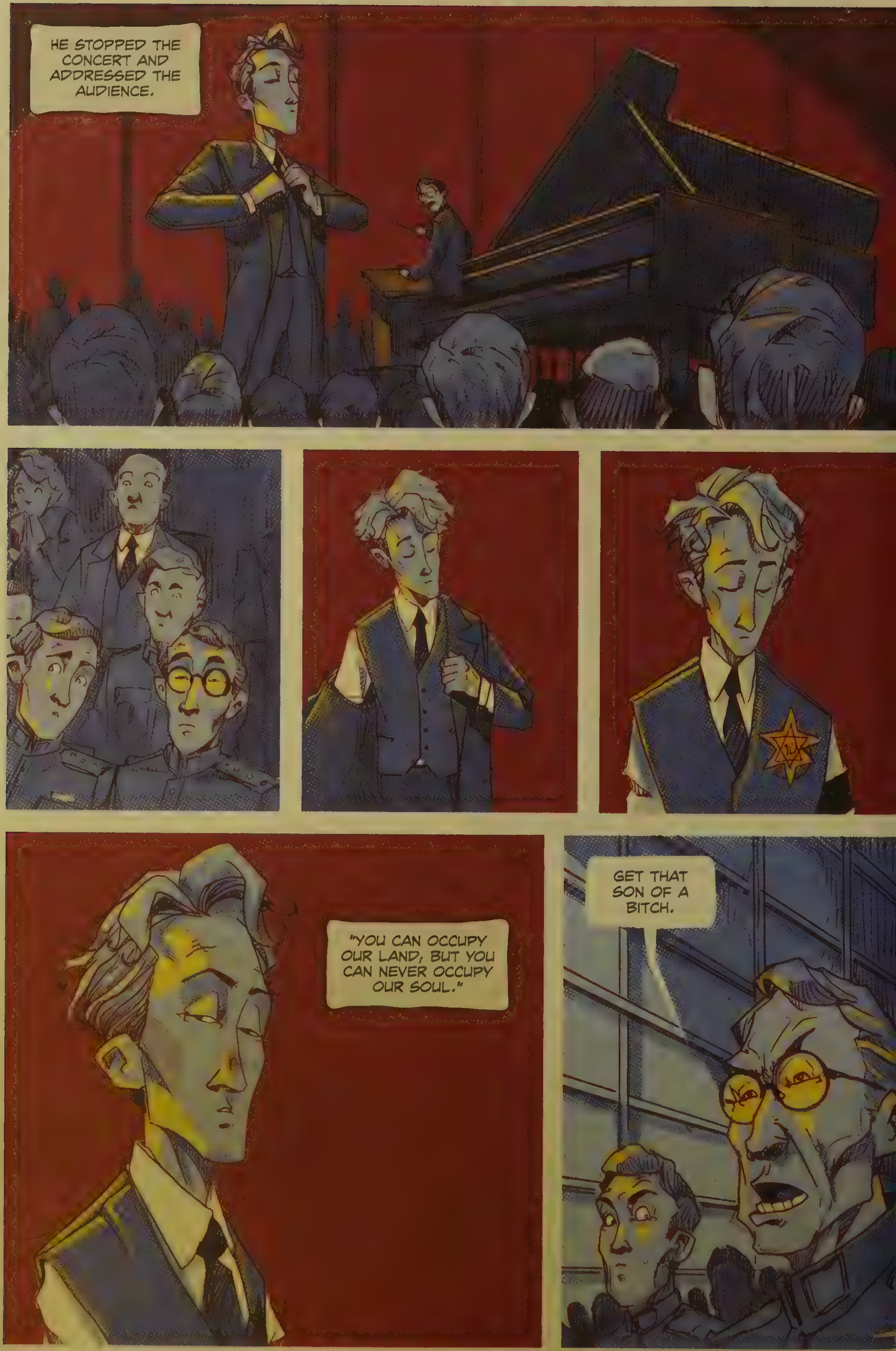

WHEN THE ORCHESTRA CAME IN, THE MOST EXTRAORDINARY THING I'VE EVER SEEN IN MY LIFE HAPPENED.

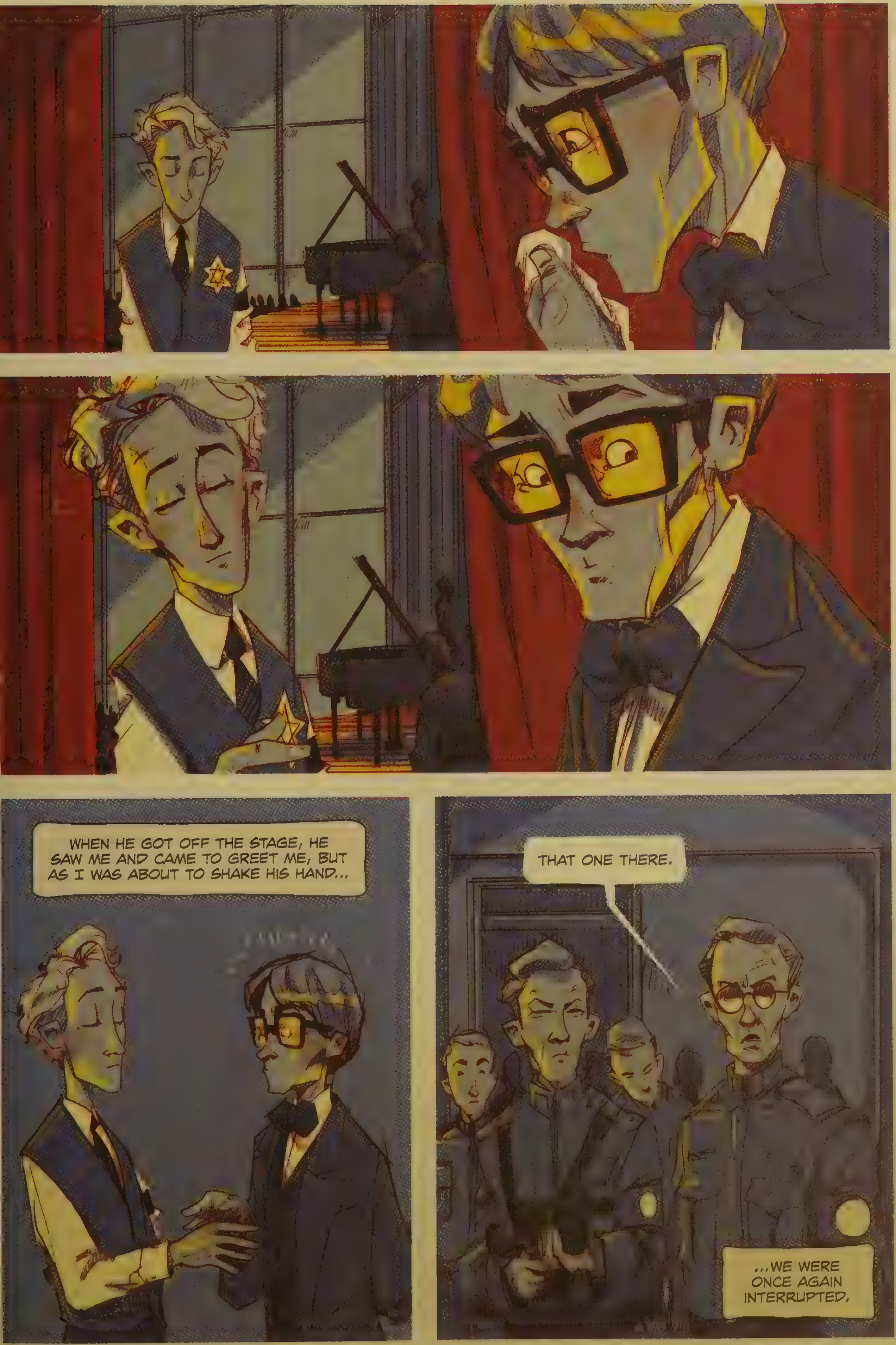

I COULDN'T BELIEVE MY OWN EYES.

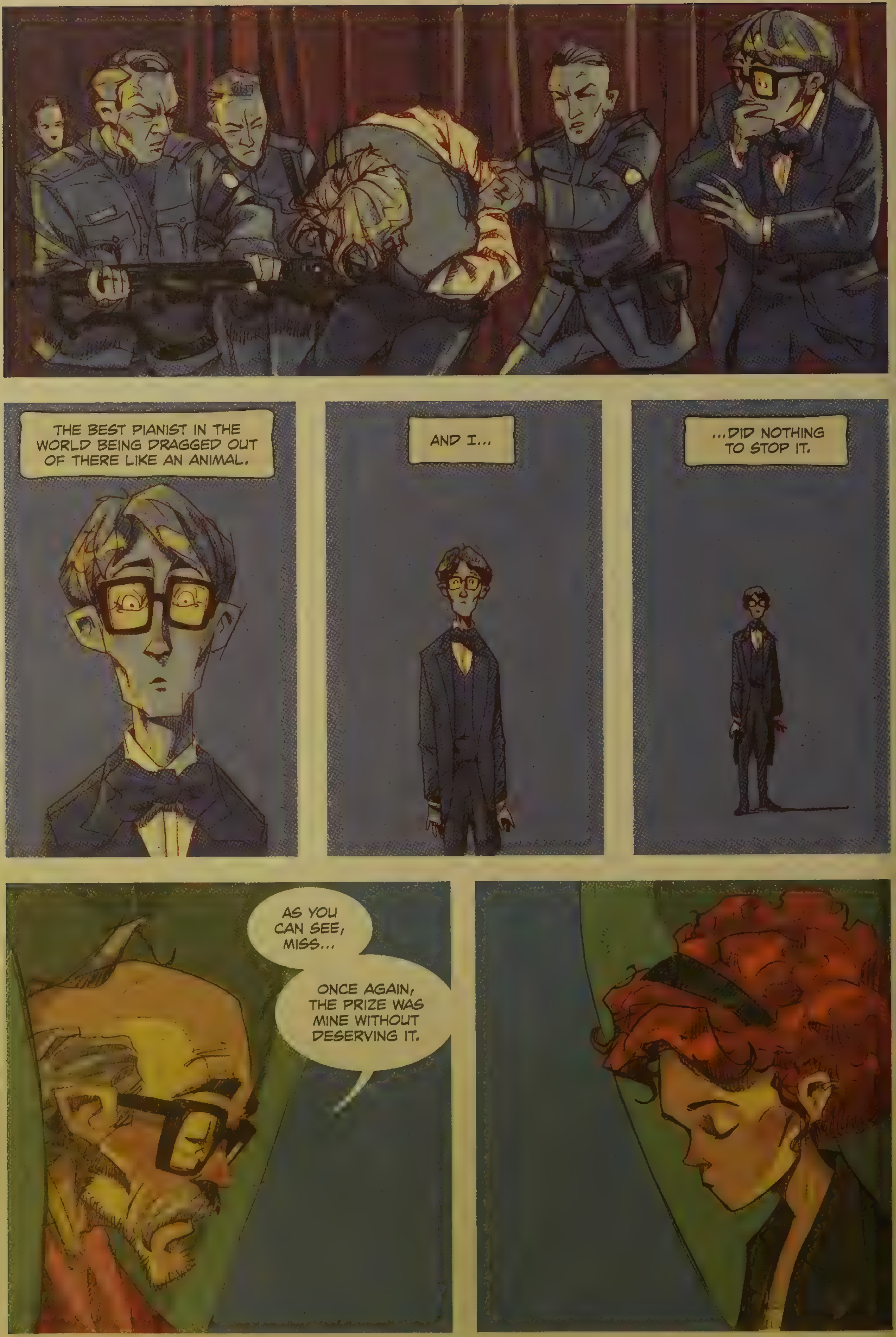

THE PIANO WAS FLYING AND DANCING ACROSS THE ROOM, ABOVE OUR HEADS.

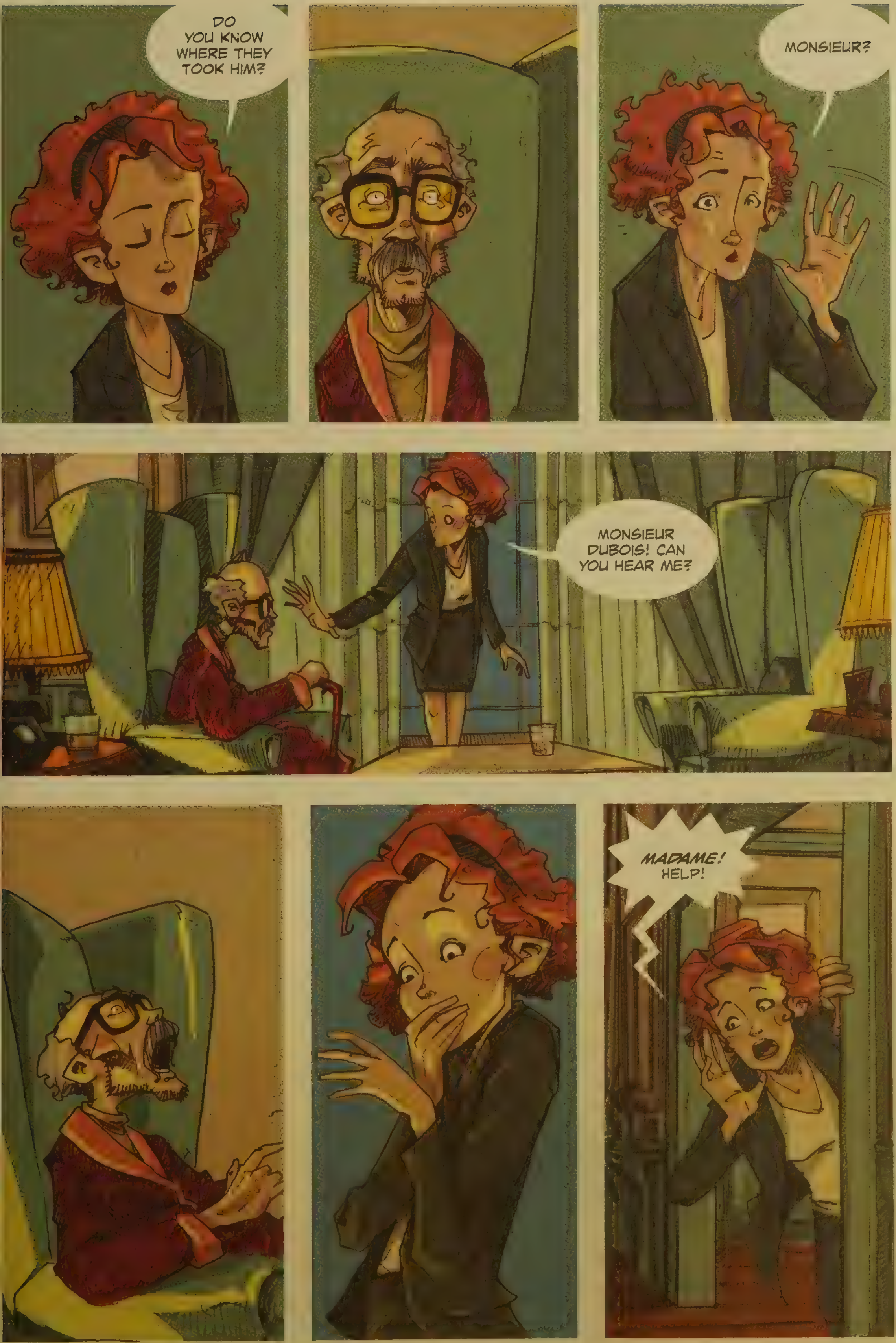

IT WAS ABSOLUTELY EXTRAORDINARY.
AS THE MOVEMENT CAME TO AN END, THE PIANO DESCENDED...
...SLOWLY, UNTIL QUIETLY RETURNING TO ITS ORIGINAL POSITION.
MONSIEUR...
ARE YOU TELLING ME THE PIANO LITERALLY LEVITATED?

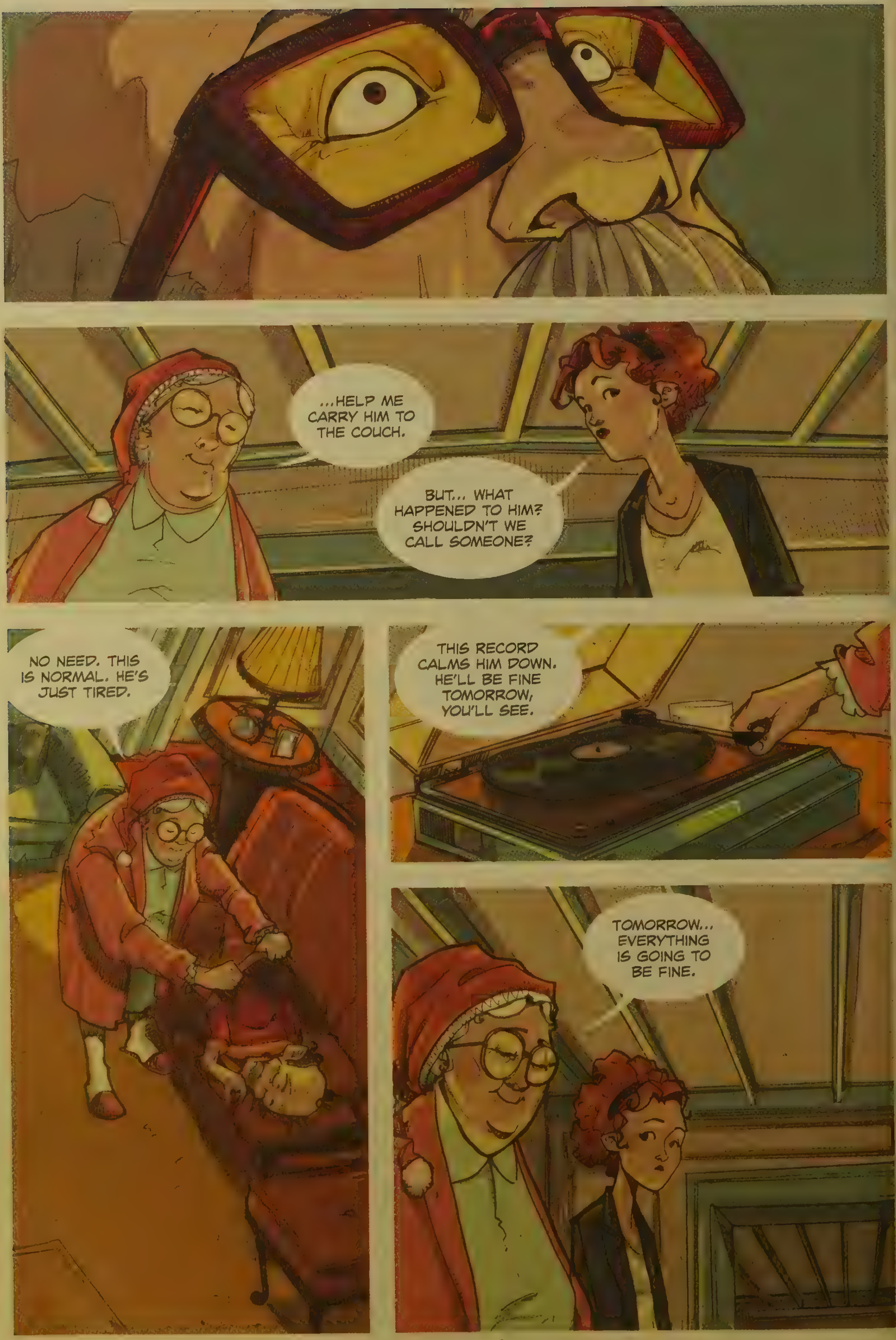

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BELIEVE ME, MISS. THE NEXT DAY, IT WAS ALL OVER THE NEWS.
YES, I READ IT. BUT... I ALWAYS THOUGHT IT WAS A METAPHOR.
ANYWAY, MONSIEUR DUBOIS... ALL IT TAKES IS A LITTLE RESEARCH TO KNOW THAT THE STORY WASN'T QUITE LIKE THAT.
I KNOW FRANÇOIS ALSO LOST THAT COMPETITION. AND, THIS TIME, YOUR MOTHER WASN'T THERE TO BRIBE ANYONE.
RIGHT. AND NOW I'LL TELL YOU THE PART THAT DIDN'T MAKE THE NEWS.
WHEN THE SECOND MOVEMENT WAS OVER, HE DIDN'T GO TO THE THIRD ONE.
"SIE KÖNNEN UNSER LAND BESETZEN, ABER NIE UNSERE SEELE BESETZEN."
DO YOU KNOW WHAT THIS MEANS?

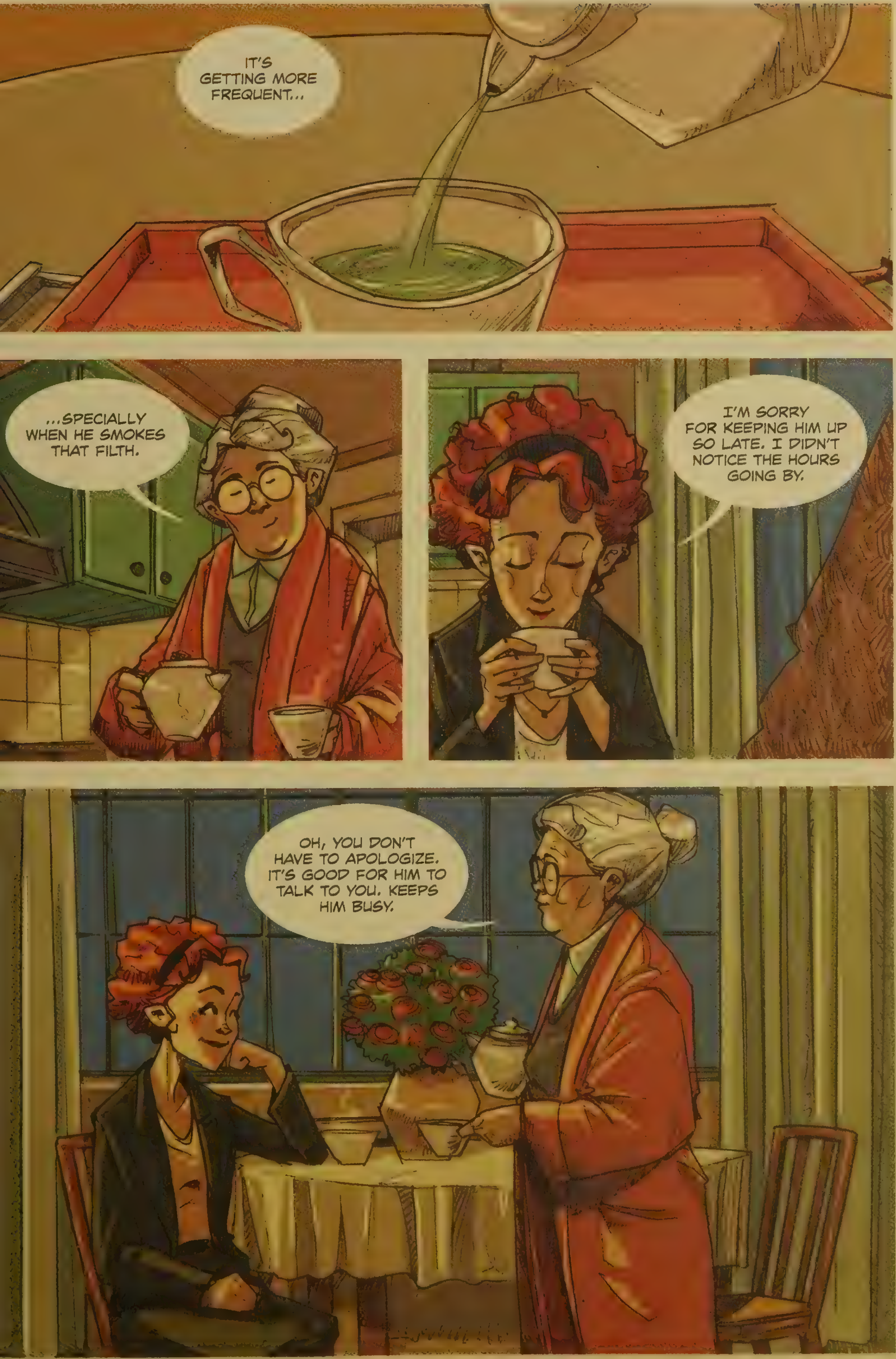

HE STOPPED THE CONCERT AND ADDRESSED THE AUDIENCE.
"YOU CAN OCCUPY OUR LAND, BUT YOU CAN NEVER OCCUPY OUR SOUL."
GET THAT SON OF A BITCH.

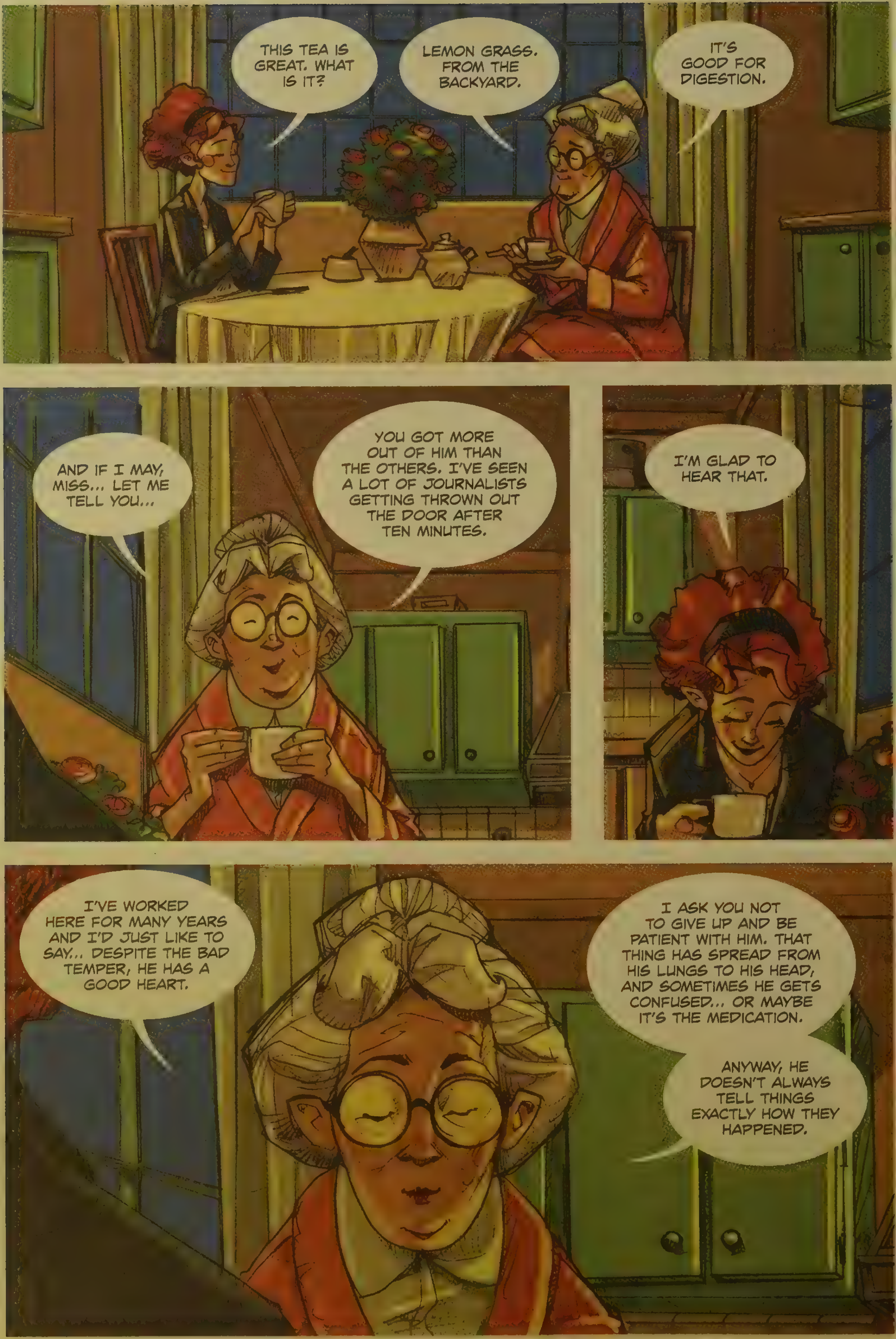

WHEN HE GOT OFF THE STAGE, HE SAW ME AND CAME TO GREET ME, BUT AS I WAS ABOUT TO SHAKE HIS HAND...
THAT ONE THERE.
...WE WERE ONCE AGAIN INTERRUPTED.

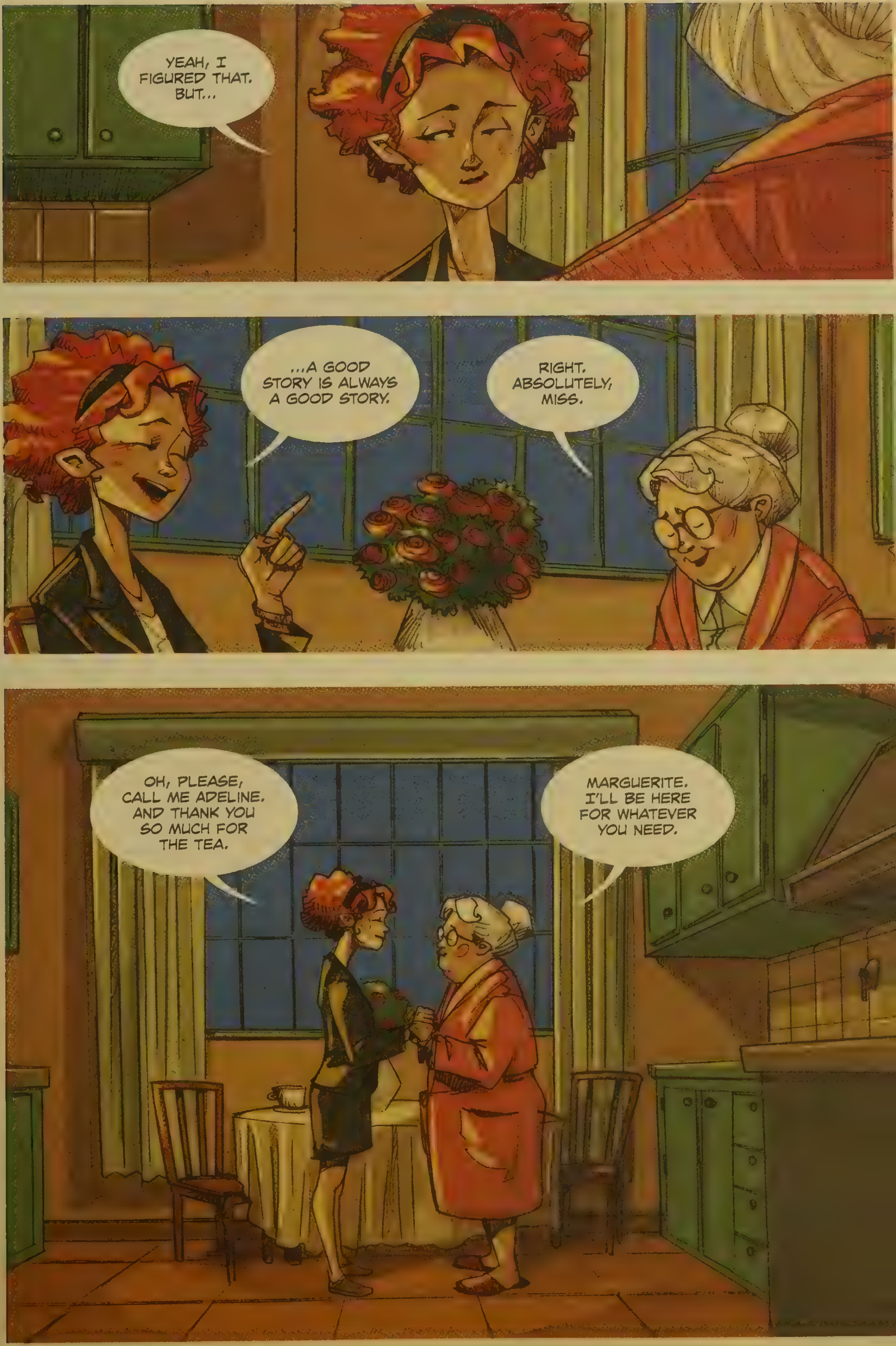

THE BEST PIANIST IN THE WORLD BEING DRAGGED OUT OF THERE LIKE AN ANIMAL.
AND I...
...DID NOTHING TO STOP IT.
AS YOU CAN SEE, MISS...
ONCE AGAIN, THE PRIZE WAS MINE WITHOUT DESERVING IT.

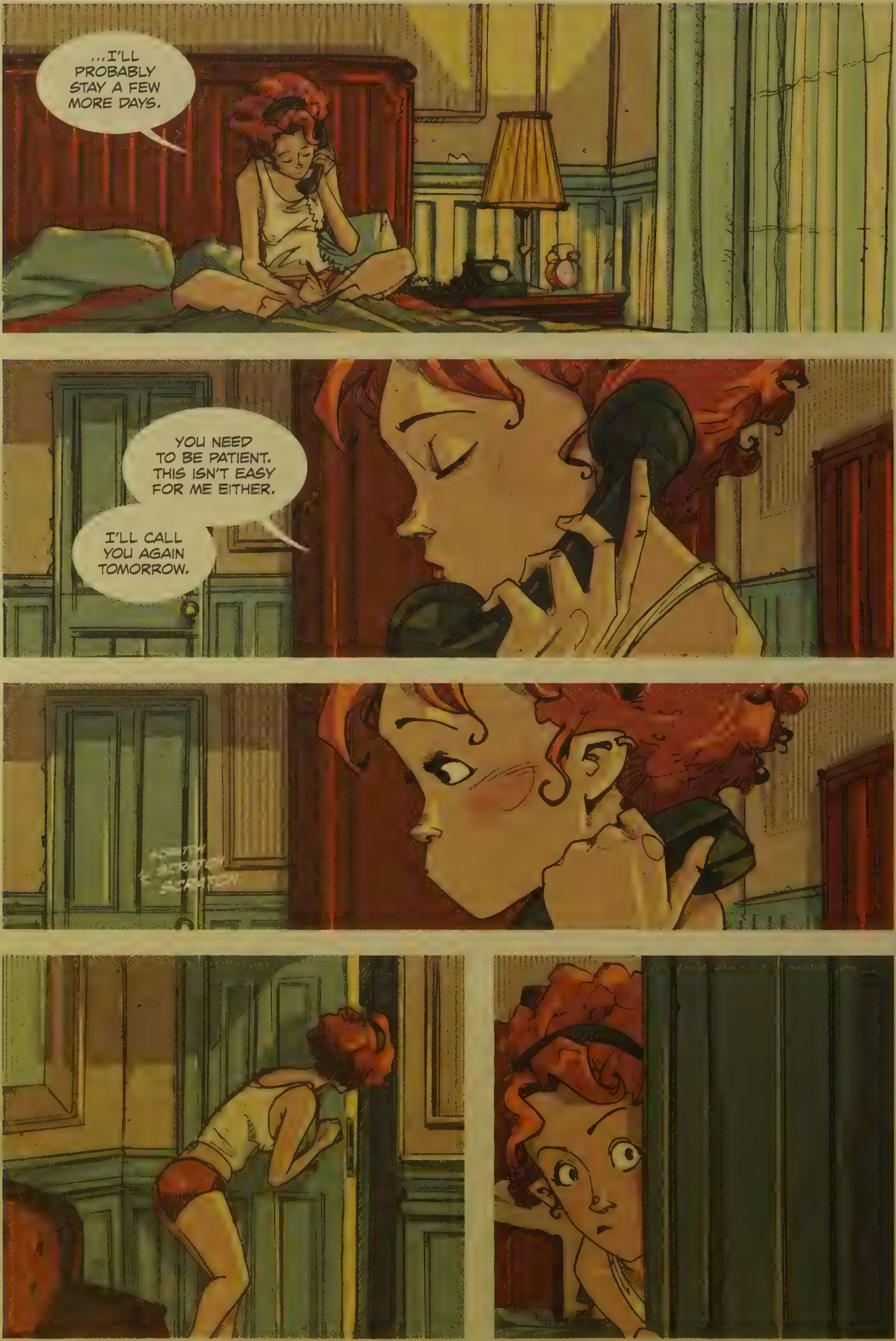

DO YOU KNOW WHERE THEY TOOK HIM?
MONSIEUR?
MONSIEUR DUBOIS! CAN YOU HEAR ME?
MADAME! HELP!

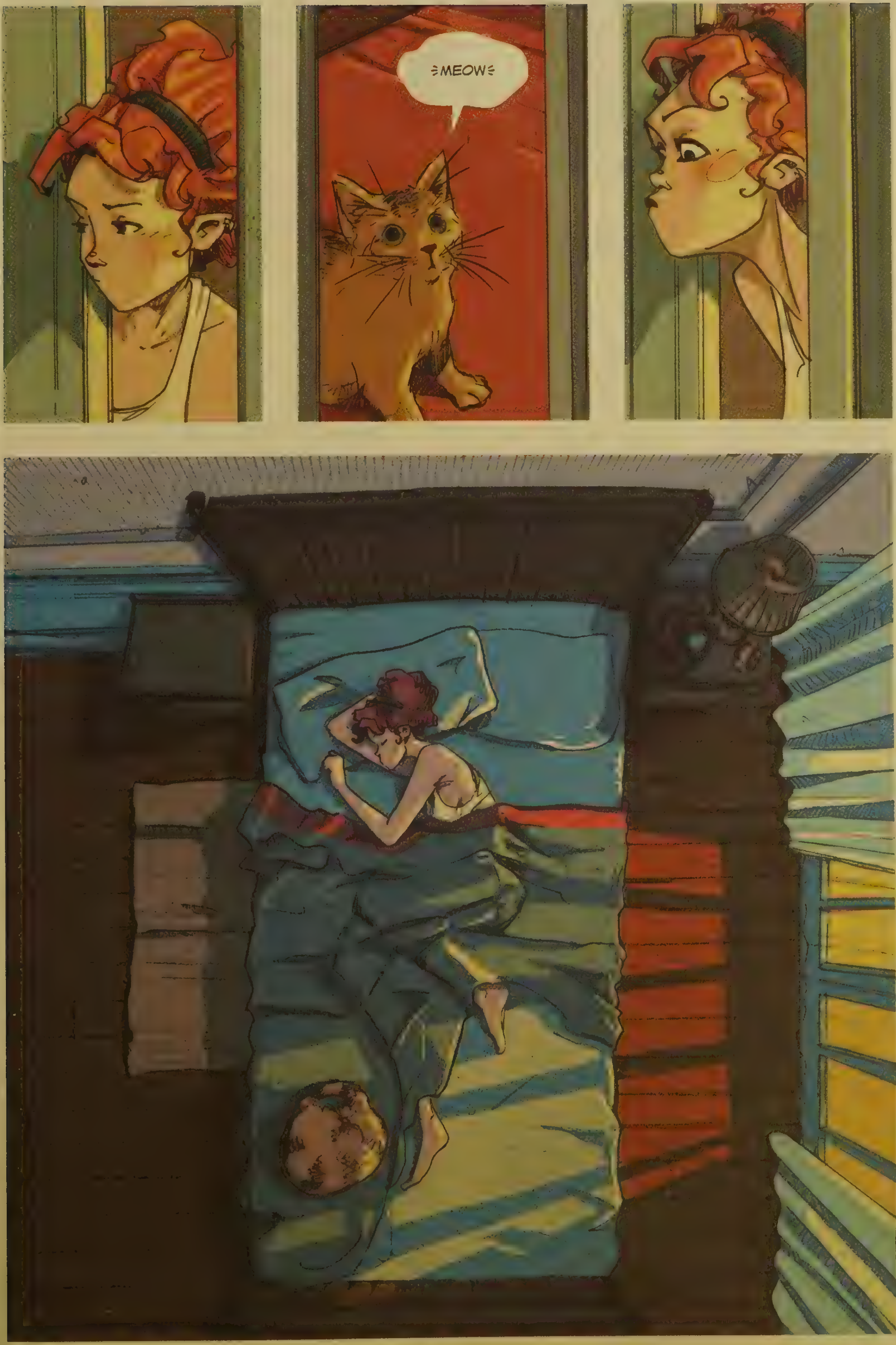

...HELP ME CARRY HIM TO THE COUCH.
BUT... WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM? SHOULDN'T WE CALL SOMEONE?
NO NEED. THIS IS NORMAL. HE'S JUST TIRED.
THIS RECORD CALMS HIM DOWN. HE'LL BE FINE TOMORROW, YOU'LL SEE.
TOMORROW... EVERYTHING IS GOING TO BE FINE.

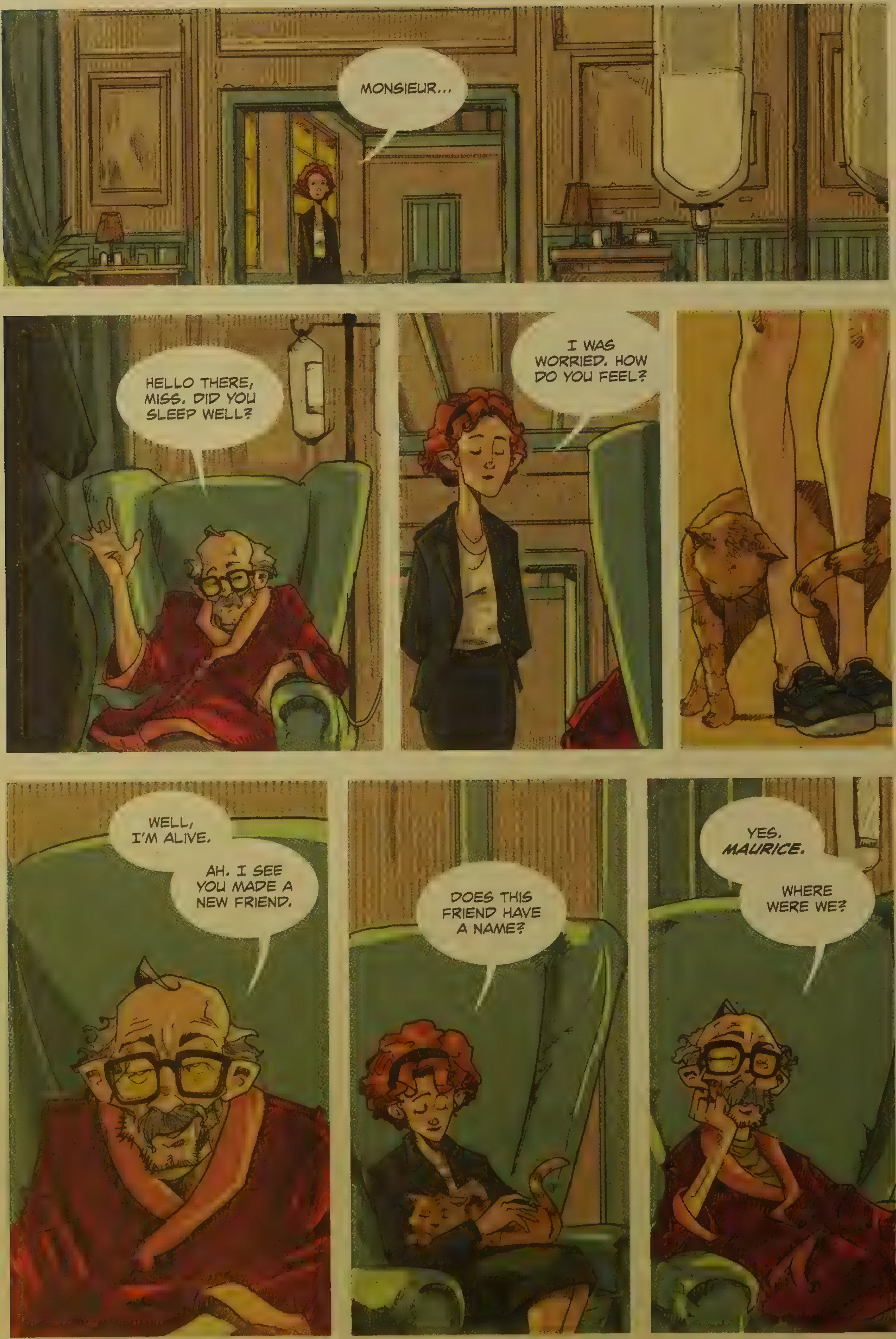

IT'S GETTING MORE FREQUENT...
...SPECIALLY WHEN HE SMOKES THAT FILTH.
I'M SORRY FOR KEEPING HIM UP SO LATE. I DIDN'T NOTICE THE HOURS GOING BY.
OH, YOU DON'T HAVE TO APOLOGIZE. IT'S GOOD FOR HIM TO TALK TO YOU. KEEPS HIM BUSY.

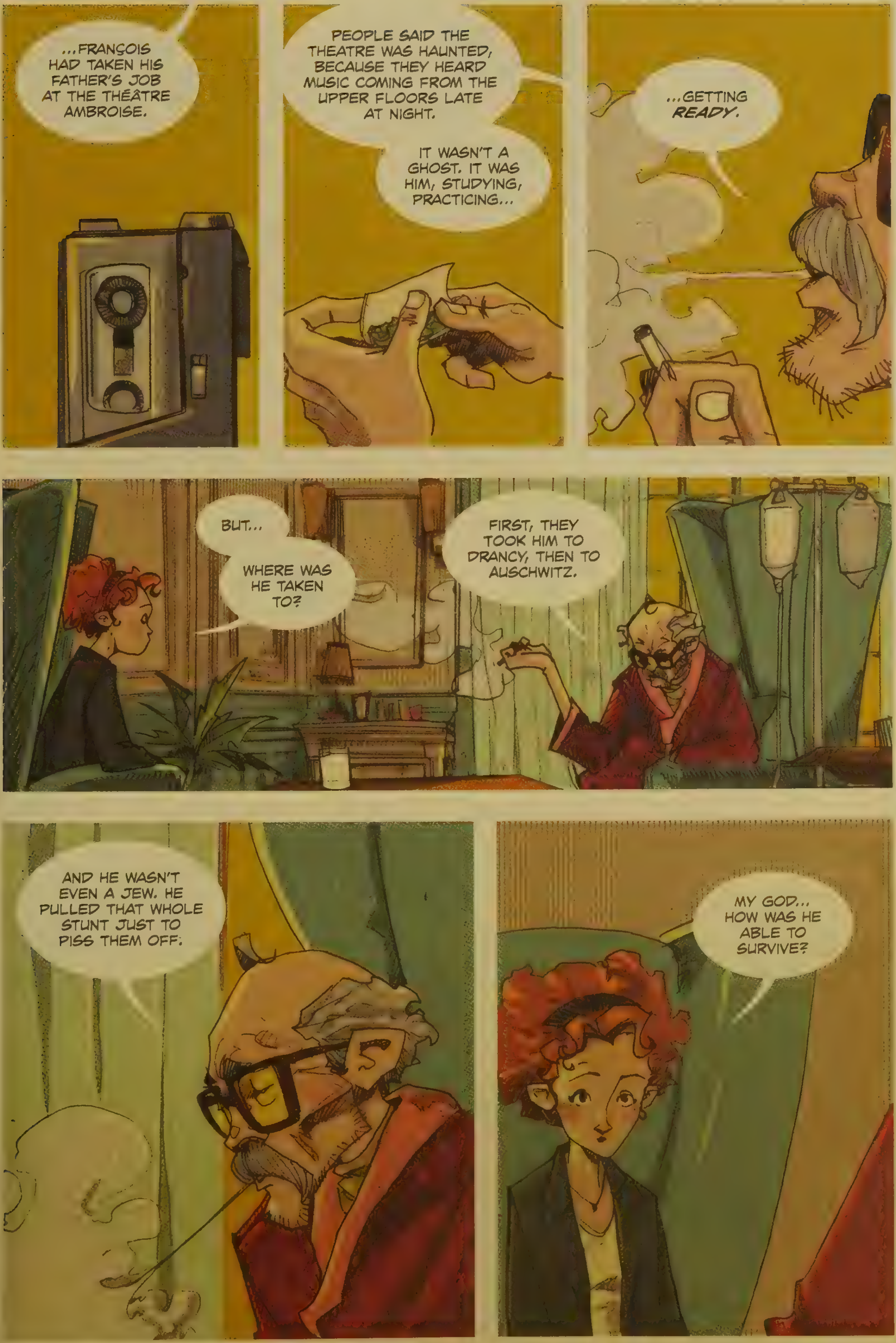

THIS TEA IS GREAT. WHAT IS IT?
LEMON GRASS. FROM THE BACKYARD.
IT'S GOOD FOR DIGESTION.
AND IF I MAY, MISS... LET ME TELL YOU...
YOU GOT MORE OUT OF HIM THAN THE OTHERS. I'VE SEEN A LOT OF JOURNALISTS GETTING THROWN OUT THE DOOR AFTER TEN MINUTES.
I'M GLAD TO HEAR THAT.
I'VE WORKED HERE FOR MANY YEARS AND I'D JUST LIKE TO SAY... DESPITE THE BAD TEMPER, HE HAS A GOOD HEART.
I ASK YOU NOT TO GIVE UP AND BE PATIENT WITH HIM. THAT THING HAS SPREAD FROM HIS LUNGS TO HIS HEAD, AND SOMETIMES HE GETS CONFUSED... OR MAYBE IT'S THE MEDICATION.
ANYWAY, HE DOESN'T ALWAYS TELL THINGS EXACTLY HOW THEY HAPPENED.

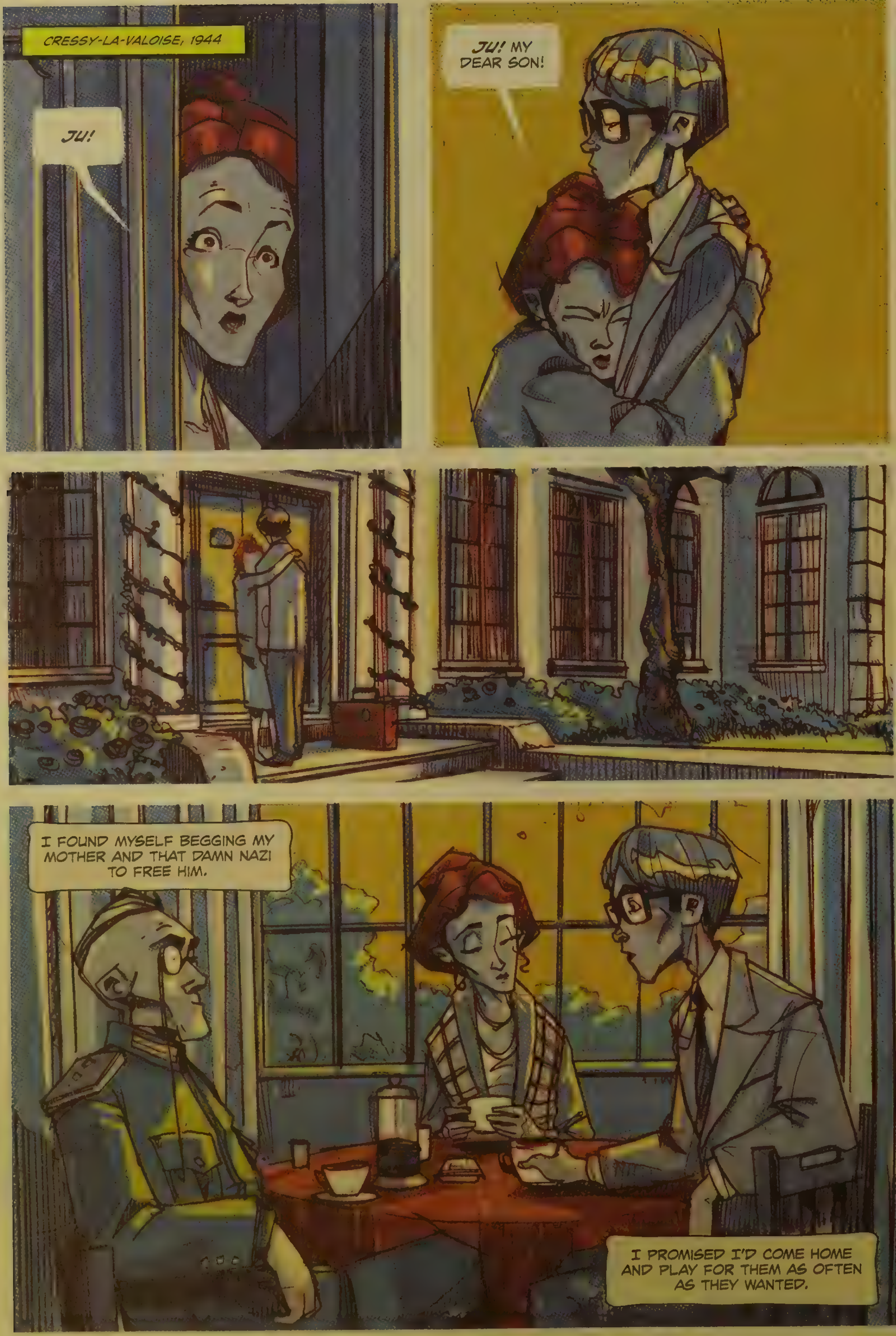

YEAH, I FIGURED THAT. BUT...
...A GOOD STORY IS ALWAYS A GOOD STORY.
RIGHT. ABSOLUTELY, MISS.
OH, PLEASE, CALL ME ADELINE. AND THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR THE TEA.
MARGUERITE. I'LL BE HERE FOR WHATEVER YOU NEED.

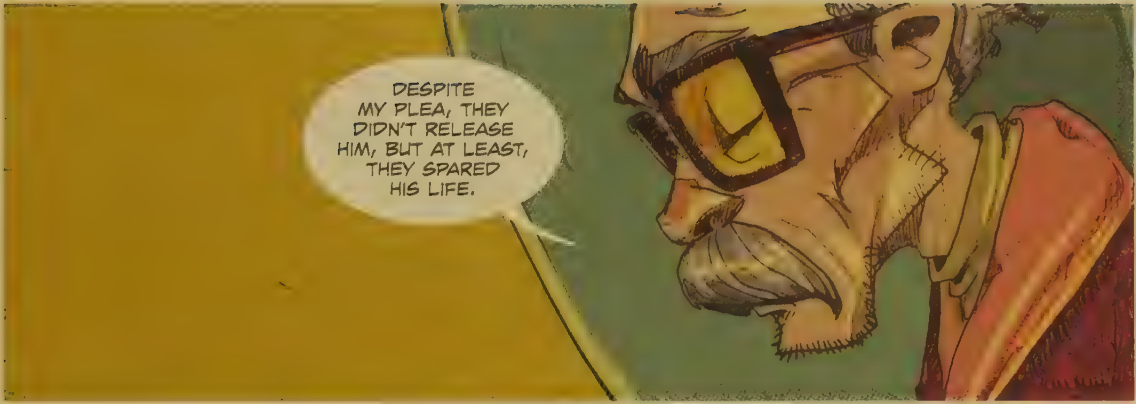

...I'LL PROBABLY STAY A FEW MORE DAYS.
YOU NEED TO BE PATIENT. THIS ISN'T EASY FOR ME EITHER.
I'LL CALL YOU AGAIN TOMORROW.
SCRATCH
SCRATCH
SCRATCH

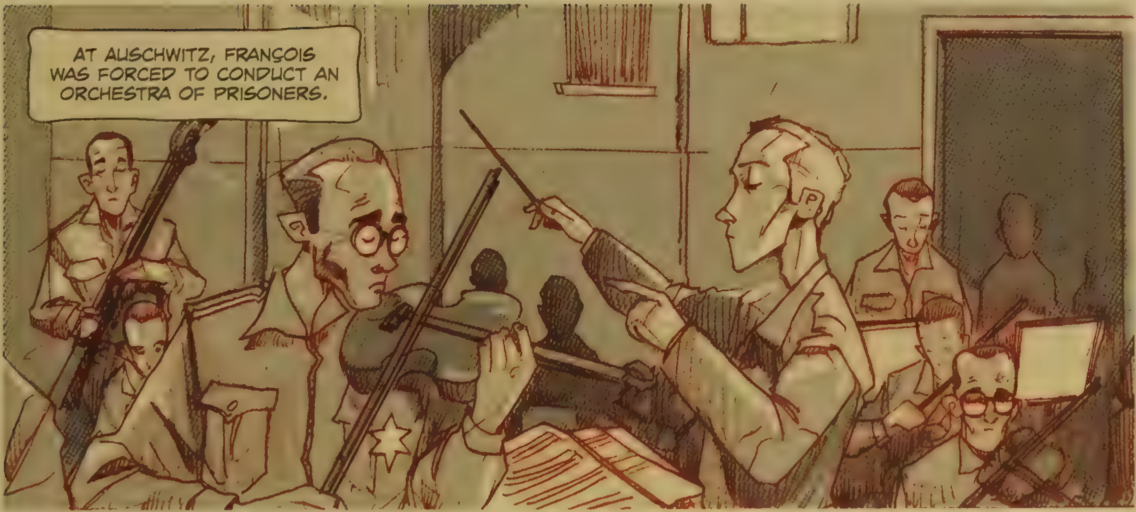

MEOW

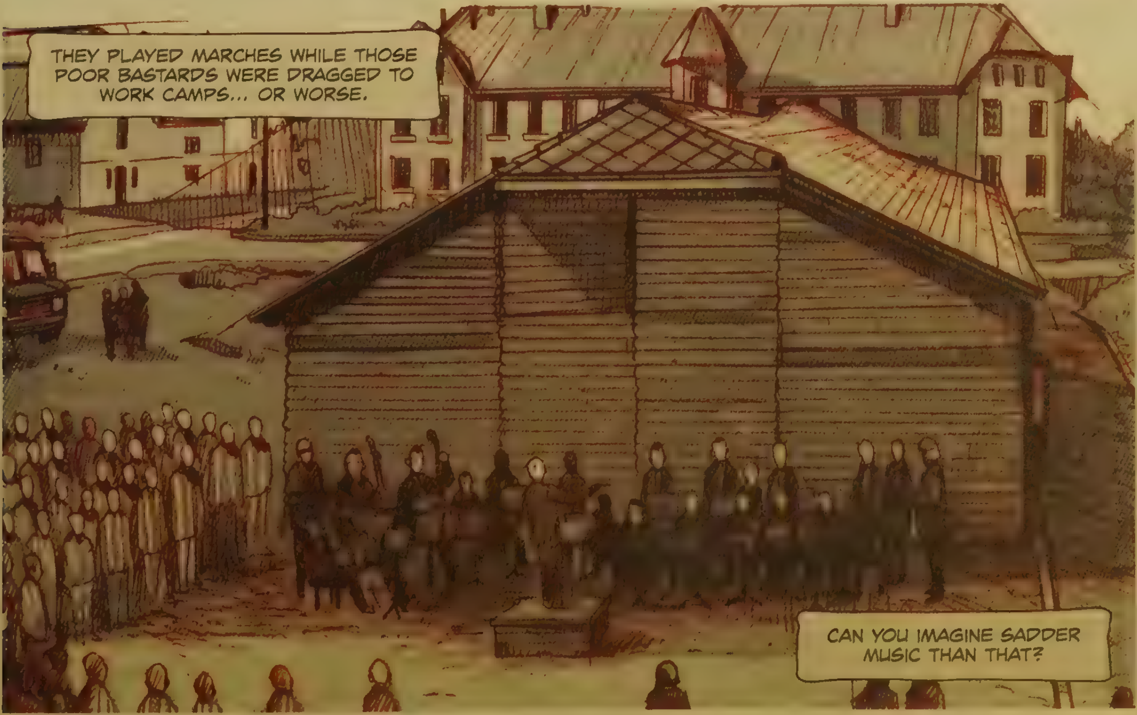

MONSIEUR...
HELLO THERE, MISS. DID YOU SLEEP WELL?
I WAS WORRIED. HOW DO YOU FEEL?
WELL, I'M ALIVE.
AH. I SEE YOU MADE A NEW FRIEND.
DOES THIS FRIEND HAVE A NAME?
YES. *MAURICE.*
WHERE WERE WE?

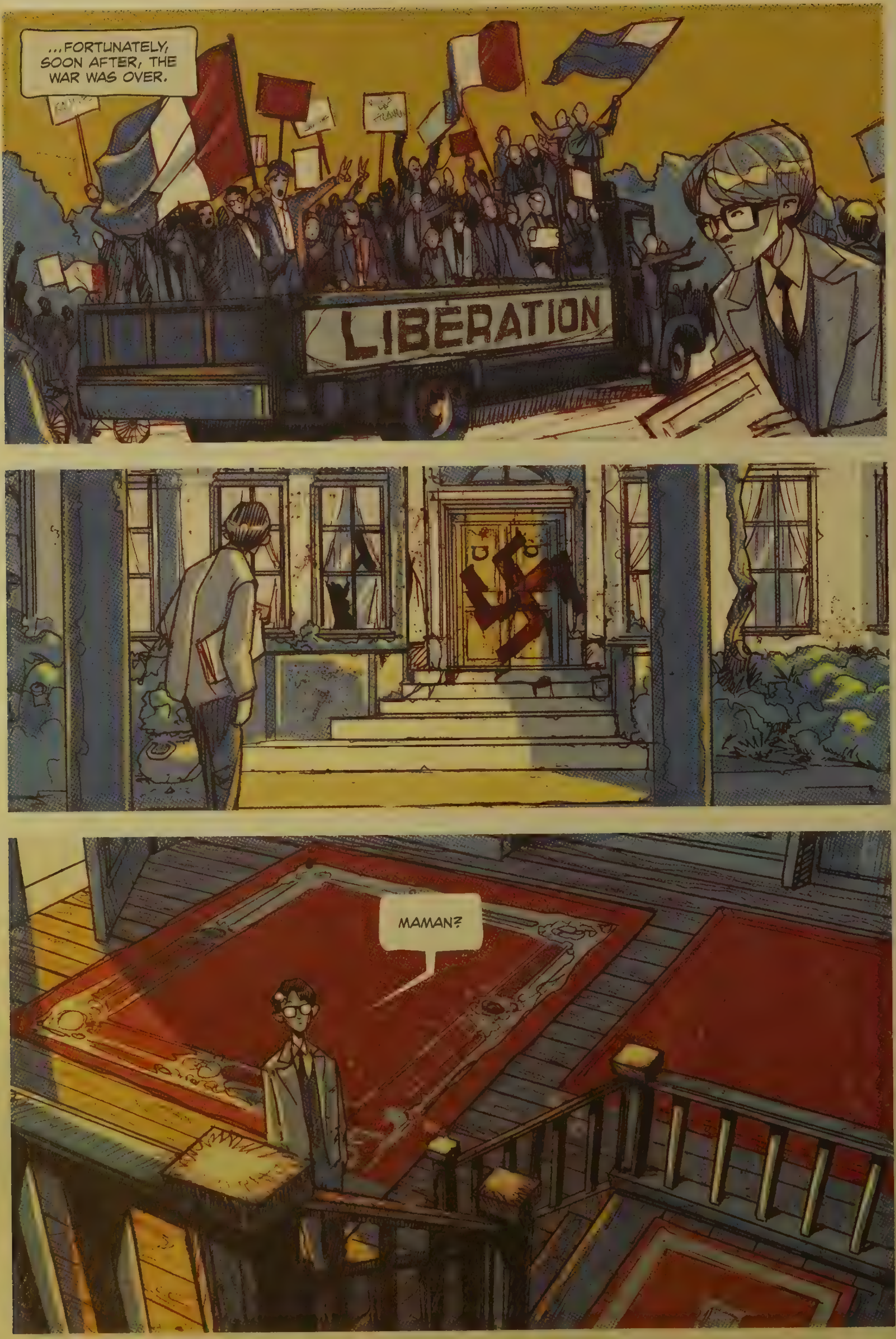

...FRANÇOIS HAD TAKEN HIS FATHER'S JOB AT THE THÉÂTRE AMBROISE.
PEOPLE SAID THE THEATRE WAS HAUNTED, BECAUSE THEY HEARD MUSIC COMING FROM THE UPPER FLOORS LATE AT NIGHT.
IT WASN'T A GHOST. IT WAS HIM, STUDYING, PRACTICING...
...GETTING *READY*.
BUT...
WHERE WAS HE TAKEN TO?
FIRST, THEY TOOK HIM TO DRANCY, THEN TO AUSCHWITZ.
AND HE WASN'T EVEN A JEW. HE PULLED THAT WHOLE STUNT JUST TO PISS THEM OFF.
MY GOD... HOW WAS HE ABLE TO SURVIVE?

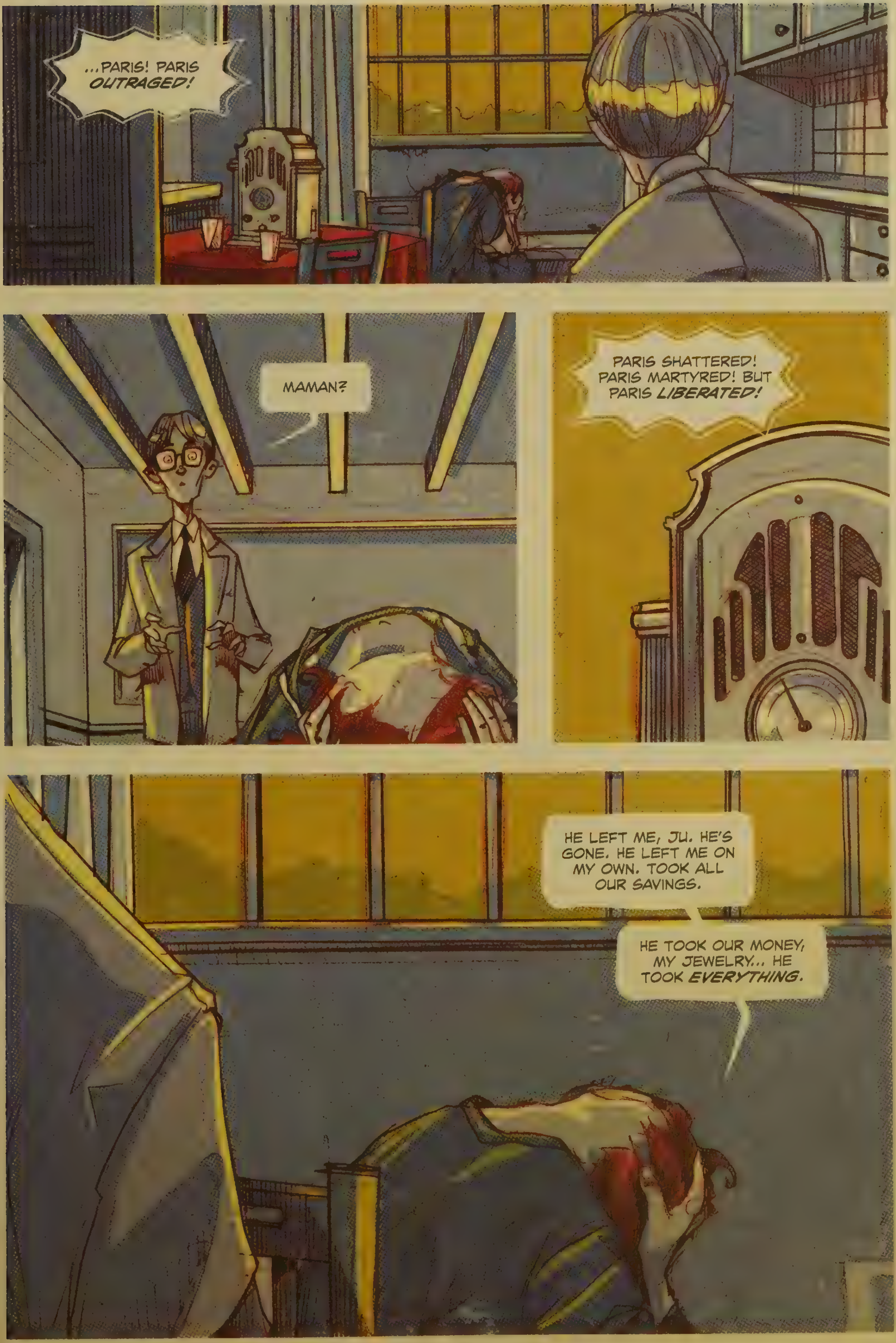

CRESSY-LA-VALOISE, 1944
JU!
JU! MY DEAR SON!
I FOUND MYSELF BEGGING MY MOTHER AND THAT DAMN NAZI TO FREE HIM.
I PROMISED I'D COME HOME AND PLAY FOR THEM AS OFTEN AS THEY WANTED.

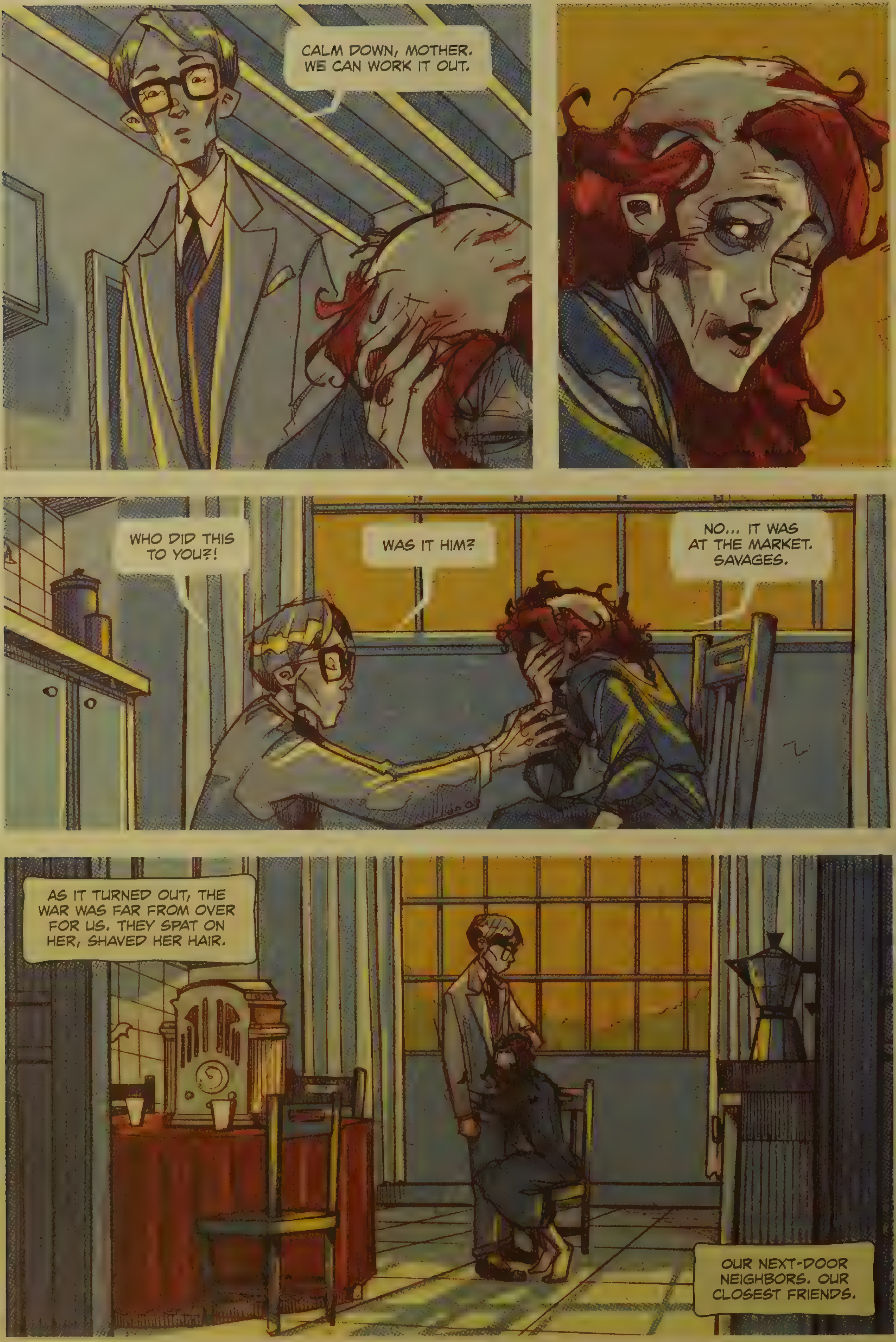

DESPITE MY PLEA, THEY DIDN'T RELEASE HIM, BUT AT LEAST, THEY SPARED HIS LIFE.

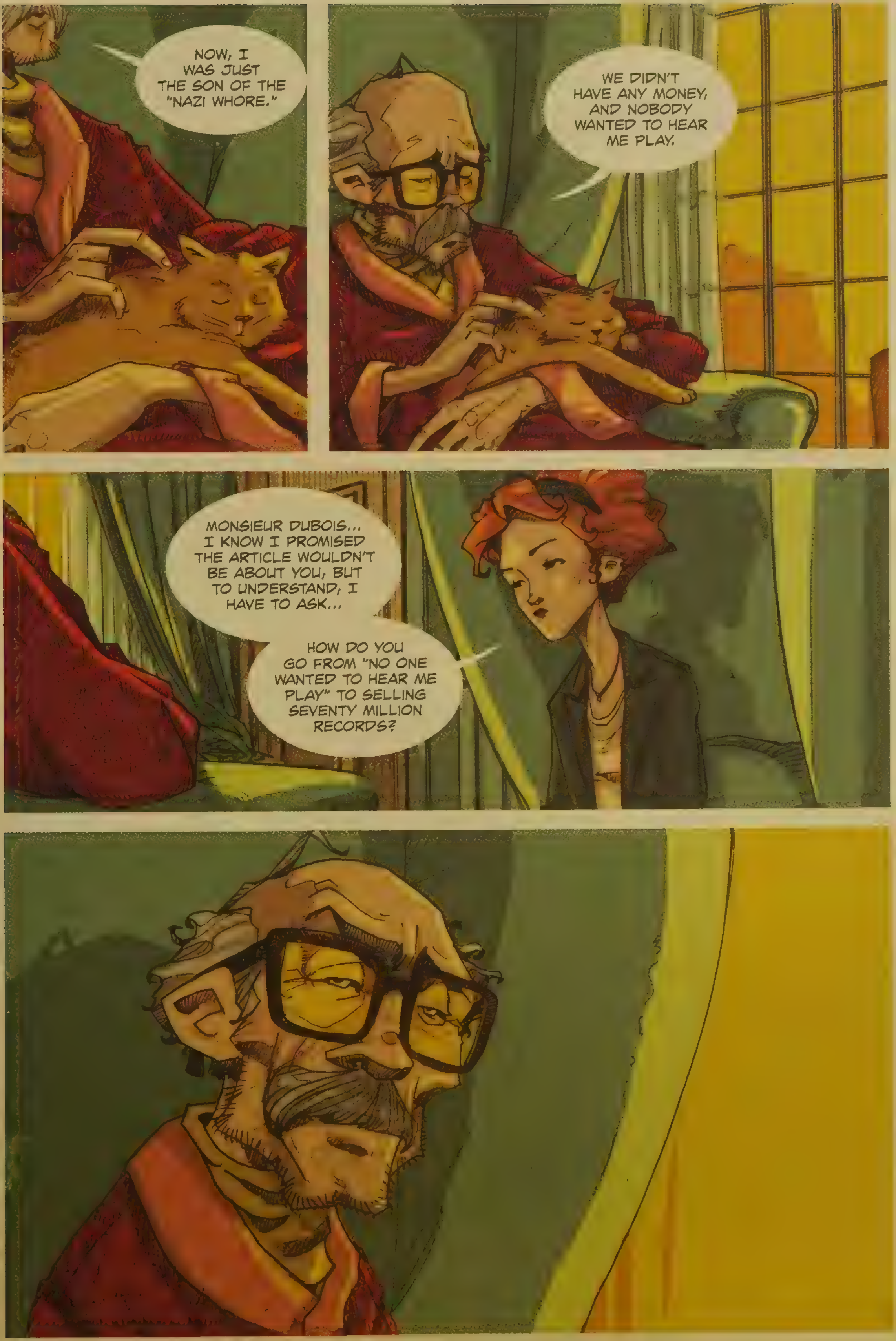

AT AUSCHWITZ, FRANÇOIS WAS FORCED TO CONDUCT AN ORCHESTRA OF PRISONERS.

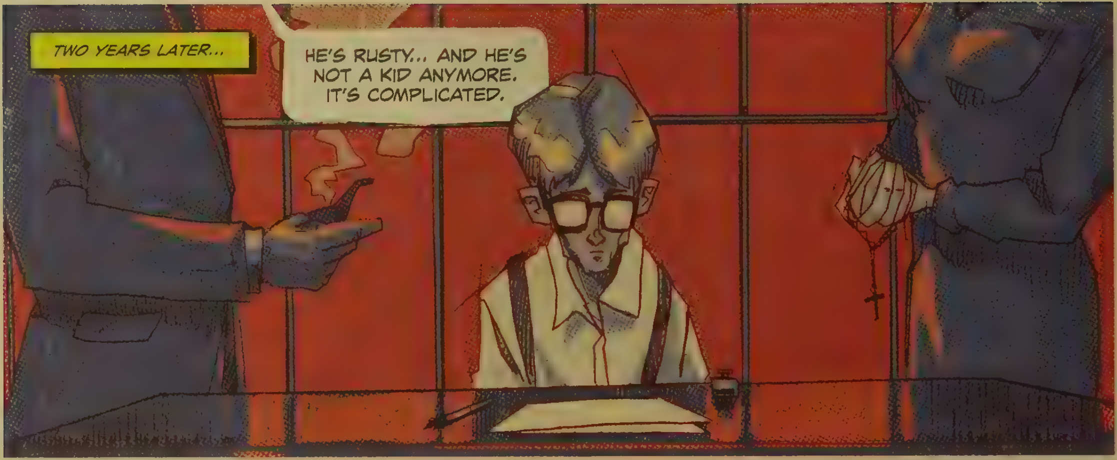

THEY PLAYED MARCHES WHILE THOSE POOR BASTARDS WERE DRAGGED TO WORK CAMPS... OR WORSE.
CAN YOU IMAGINE SADDER MUSIC THAN THAT?

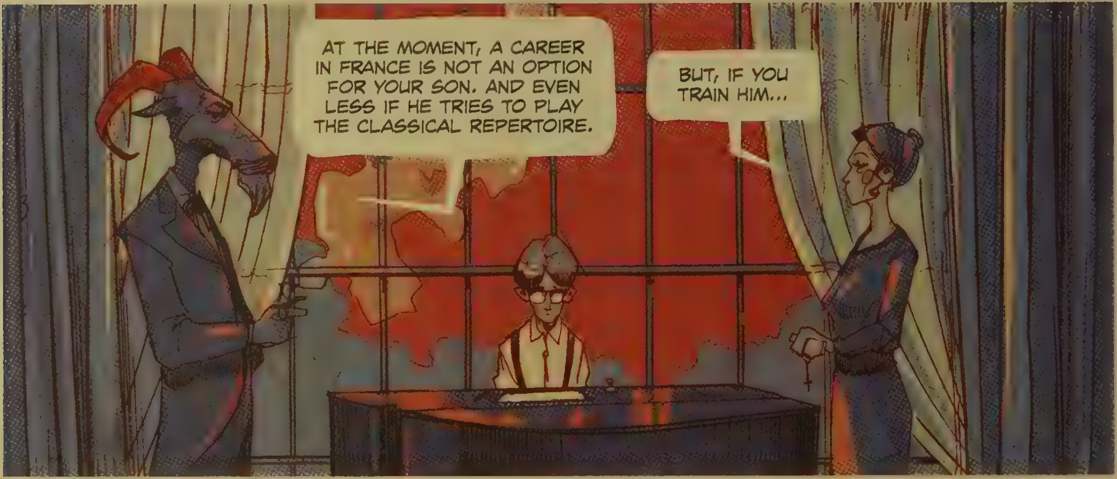

...FORTUNATELY, SOON AFTER, THE WAR WAS OVER.
LIBÉRATION
MAMAN?

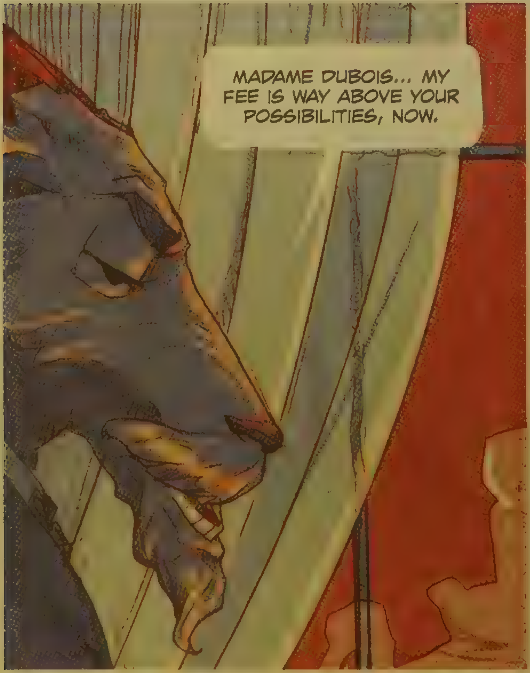

...PARIS! PARIS *OUTRAGED!*
MAMAN?
PARIS SHATTERED! PARIS MARTYRED! BUT PARIS *LIBERATED!*
HE LEFT ME, JU. HE'S GONE. HE LEFT ME ON MY OWN. TOOK ALL OUR SAVINGS.
HE TOOK OUR MONEY, MY JEWELRY... HE TOOK *EVERYTHING.*

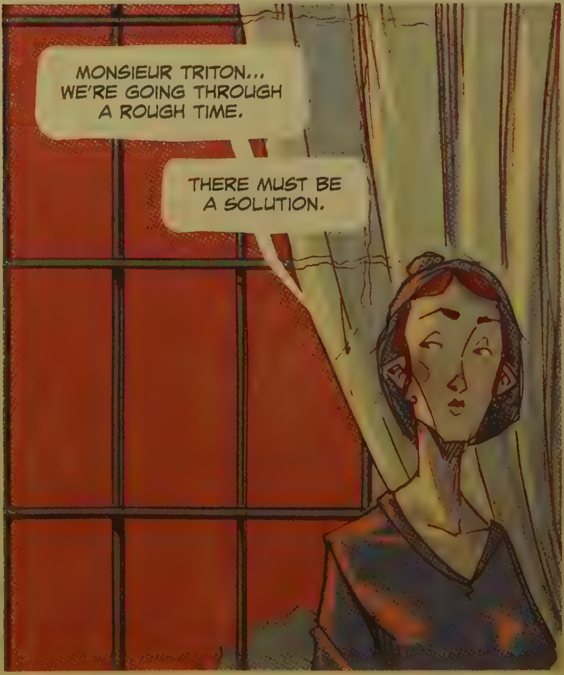

CALM DOWN, MOTHER. WE CAN WORK IT OUT.
WHO DID THIS TO YOU?!
WAS IT HIM?
NO... IT WAS AT THE MARKET. SAVAGES.
AS IT TURNED OUT, THE WAR WAS FAR FROM OVER FOR US. THEY SPAT ON HER, SHAVED HER HAIR.
OUR NEXT-DOOR NEIGHBORS. OUR CLOSEST FRIENDS.

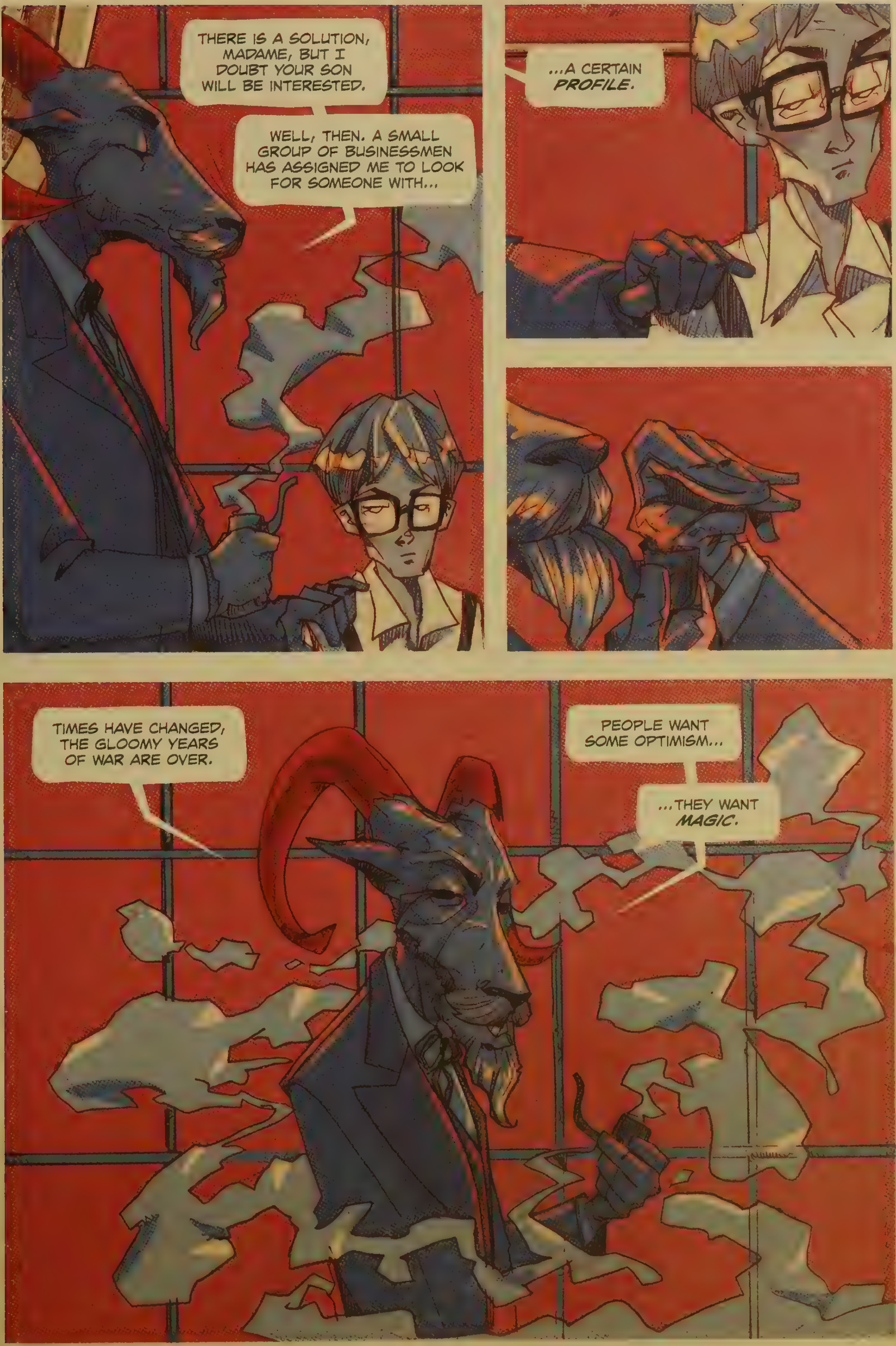

NOW, I WAS JUST THE SON OF THE "NAZI WHORE."
WE DIDN'T HAVE ANY MONEY, AND NOBODY WANTED TO HEAR ME PLAY.
MONSIEUR DUBOIS... I KNOW I PROMISED THE ARTICLE WOULDN'T BE ABOUT YOU, BUT TO UNDERSTAND, I HAVE TO ASK...
HOW DO YOU GO FROM "NO ONE WANTED TO HEAR ME PLAY" TO SELLING SEVENTY MILLION RECORDS?

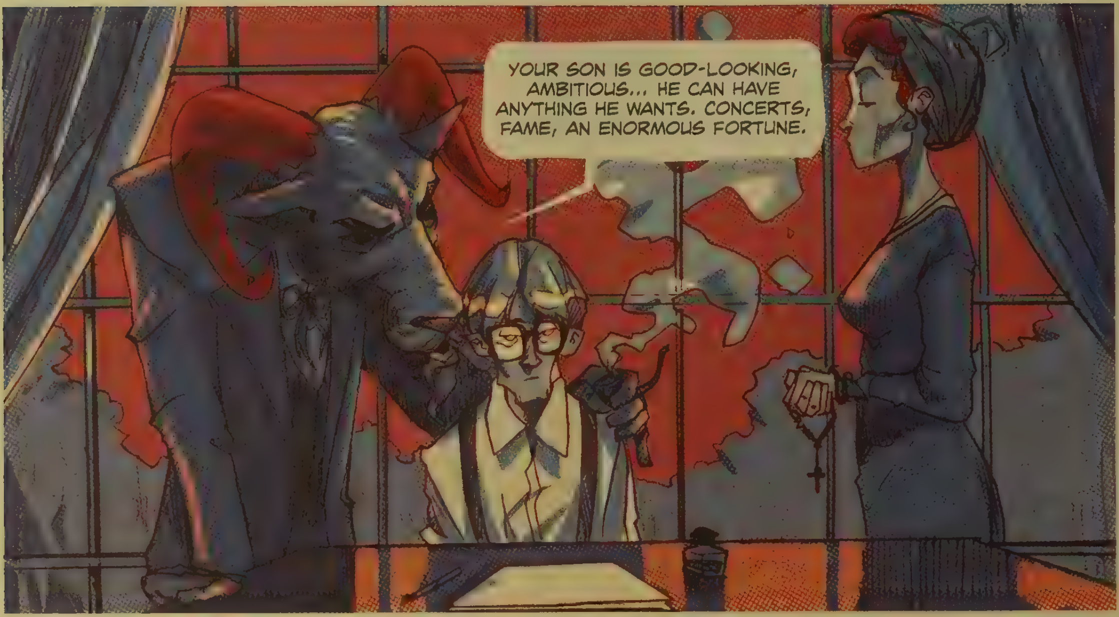

TWO YEARS LATER...
HE'S RUSTY... AND HE'S NOT A KID ANYMORE. IT'S COMPLICATED.

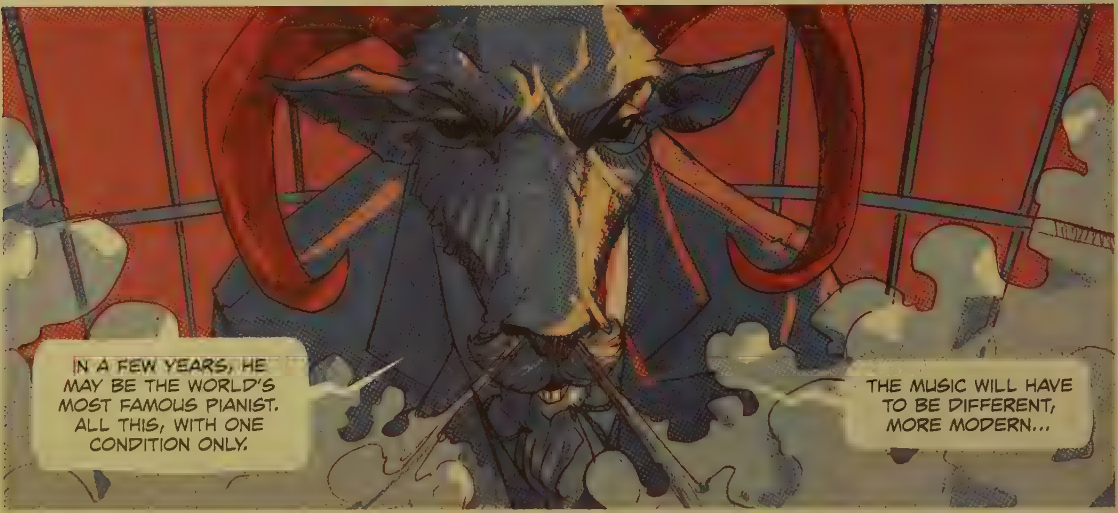

AT THE MOMENT, A CAREER IN FRANCE IS NOT AN OPTION FOR YOUR SON. AND EVEN LESS IF HE TRIES TO PLAY THE CLASSICAL REPERTOIRE.
BUT, IF YOU TRAIN HIM...

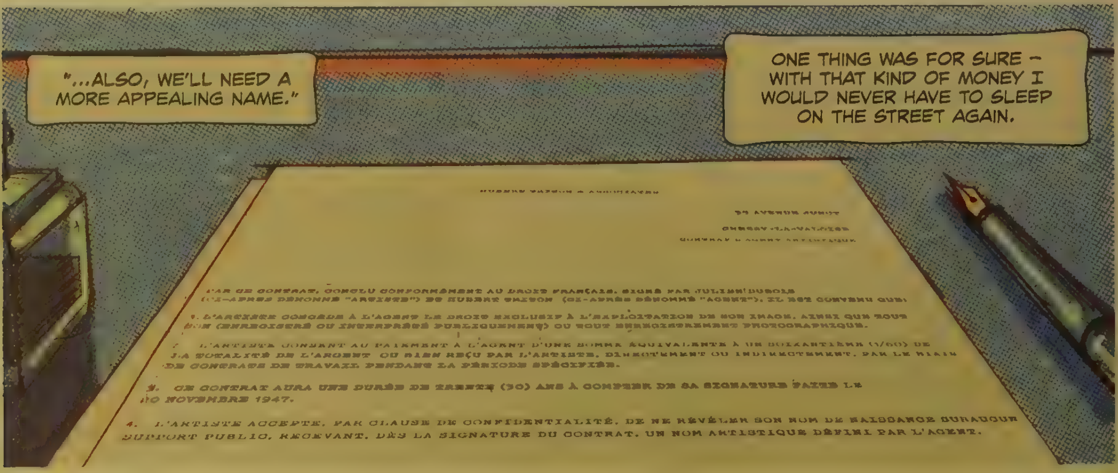

MADAME DUBOIS... MY FEE IS WAY ABOVE YOUR POSSIBILITIES, NOW.

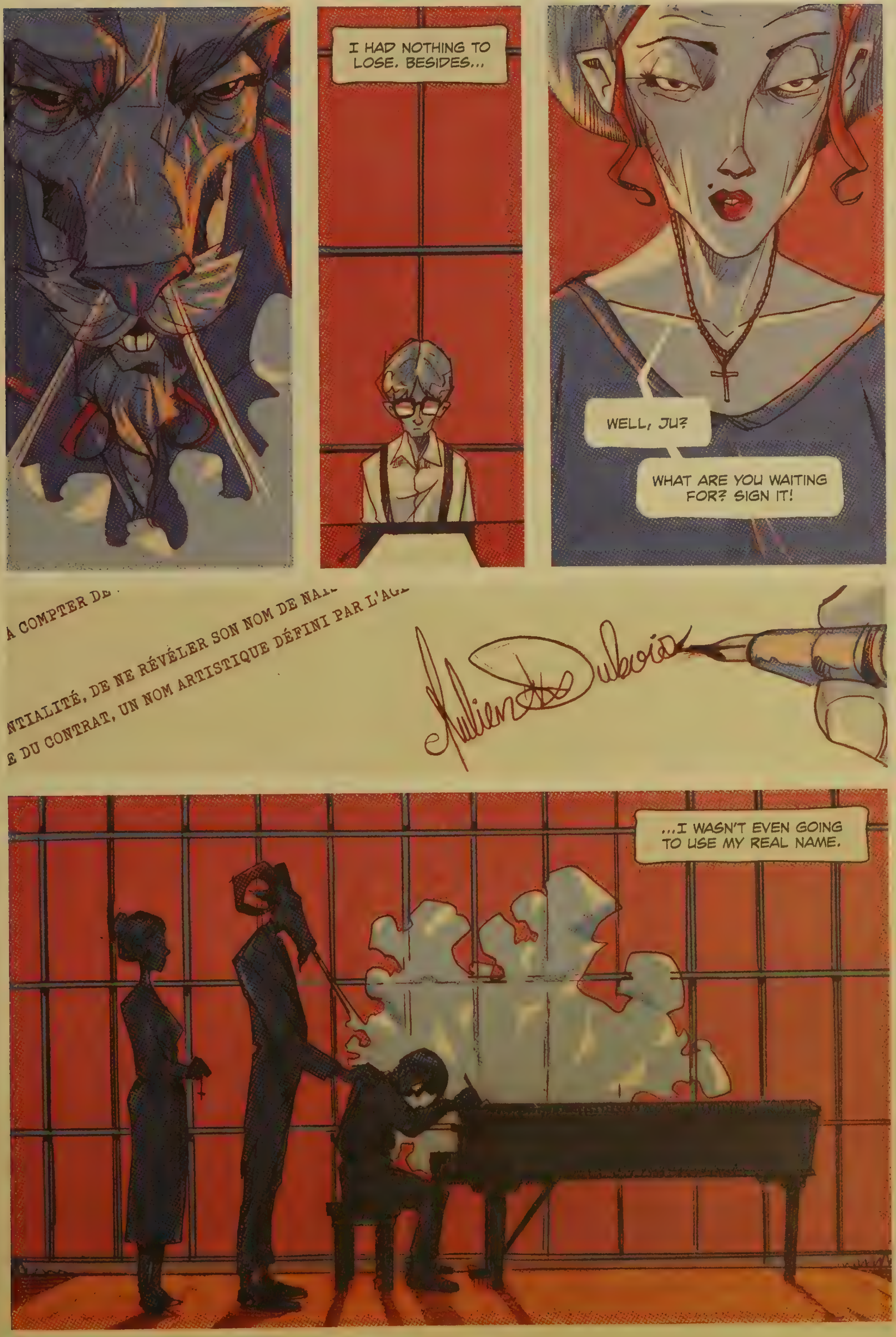

MONSIEUR TRITON... WE'RE GOING THROUGH A ROUGH TIME.
THERE MUST BE A SOLUTION.

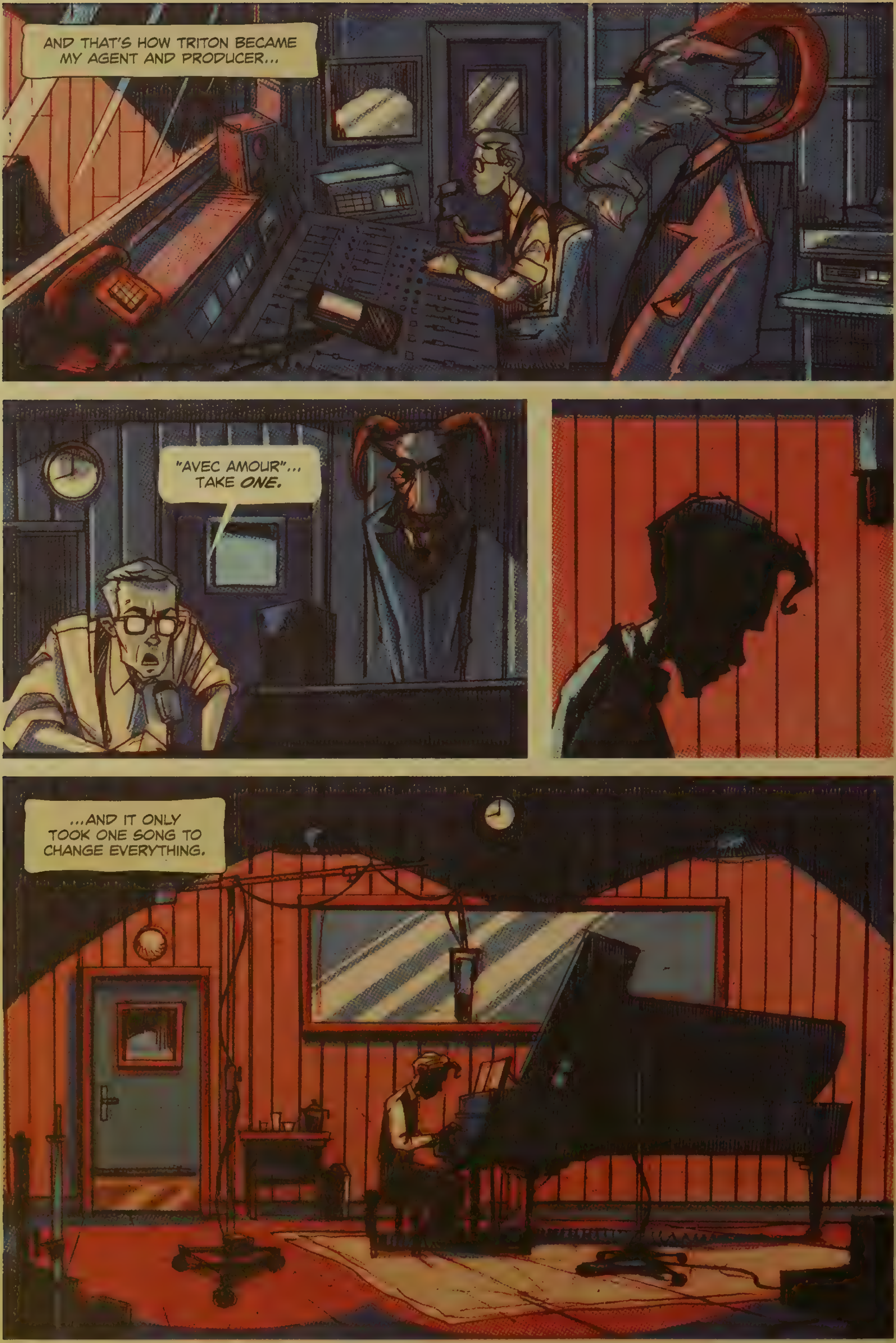

THERE IS A SOLUTION, MADAME, BUT I DOUBT YOUR SON WILL BE INTERESTED.
WELL, THEN. A SMALL GROUP OF BUSINESSMEN HAS ASSIGNED ME TO LOOK FOR SOMEONE WITH...
...A CERTAIN *PROFILE*.
TIMES HAVE CHANGED, THE GLOOMY YEARS OF WAR ARE OVER.
PEOPLE WANT SOME OPTIMISM...
...THEY WANT *MAGIC*.

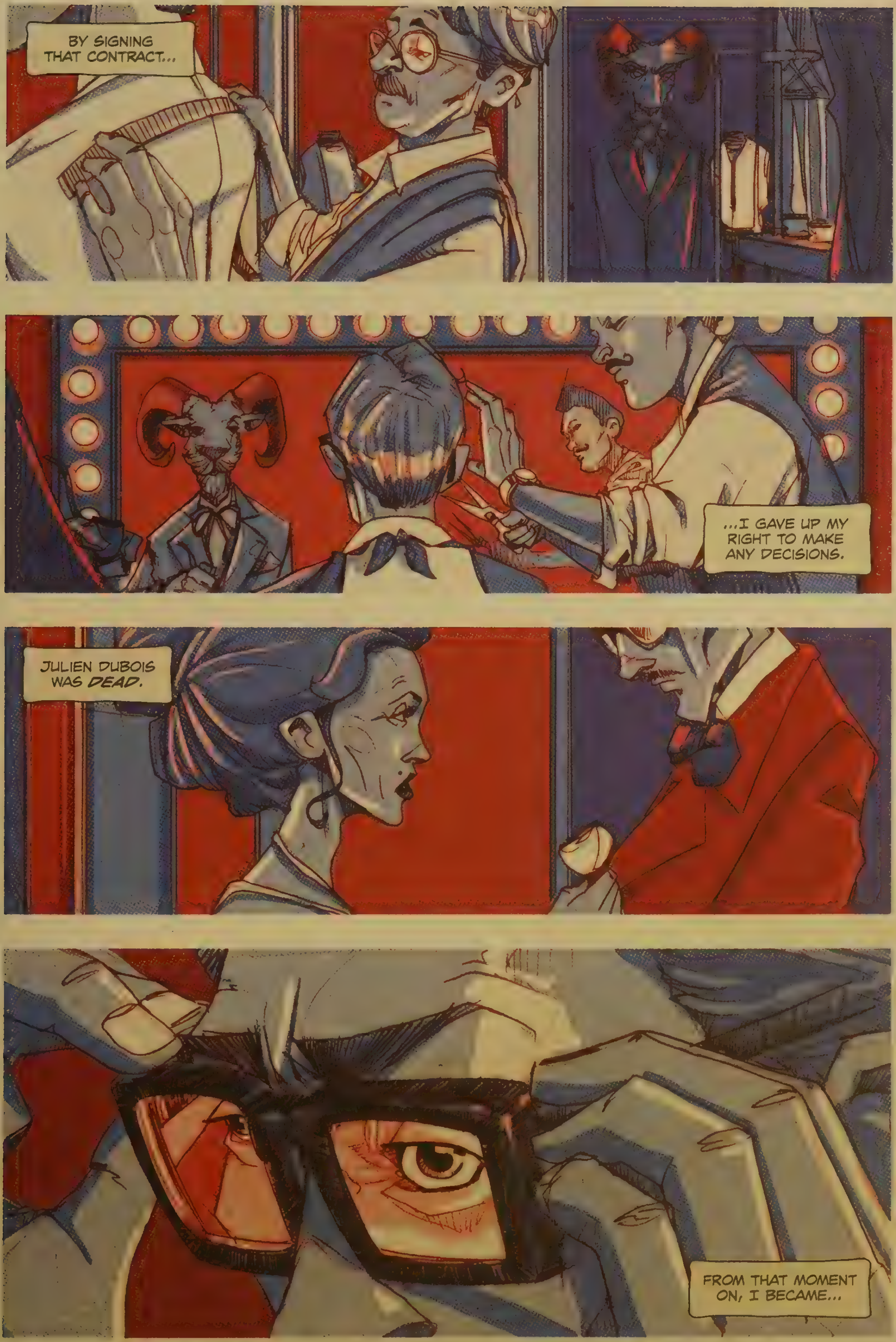

YOUR SON IS GOOD-LOOKING, AMBITIOUS... HE CAN HAVE ANYTHING HE WANTS. CONCERTS, FAME, AN ENORMOUS FORTUNE.


IN A FEW YEARS, HE MAY BE THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS PIANIST. ALL THIS, WITH ONE CONDITION ONLY.
THE MUSIC WILL HAVE TO BE DIFFERENT, MORE MODERN...


"...ALSO, WE'LL NEED A MORE APPEALING NAME."
ONE THING WAS FOR SURE – WITH THAT KIND OF MONEY I WOULD NEVER HAVE TO SLEEP ON THE STREET AGAIN.

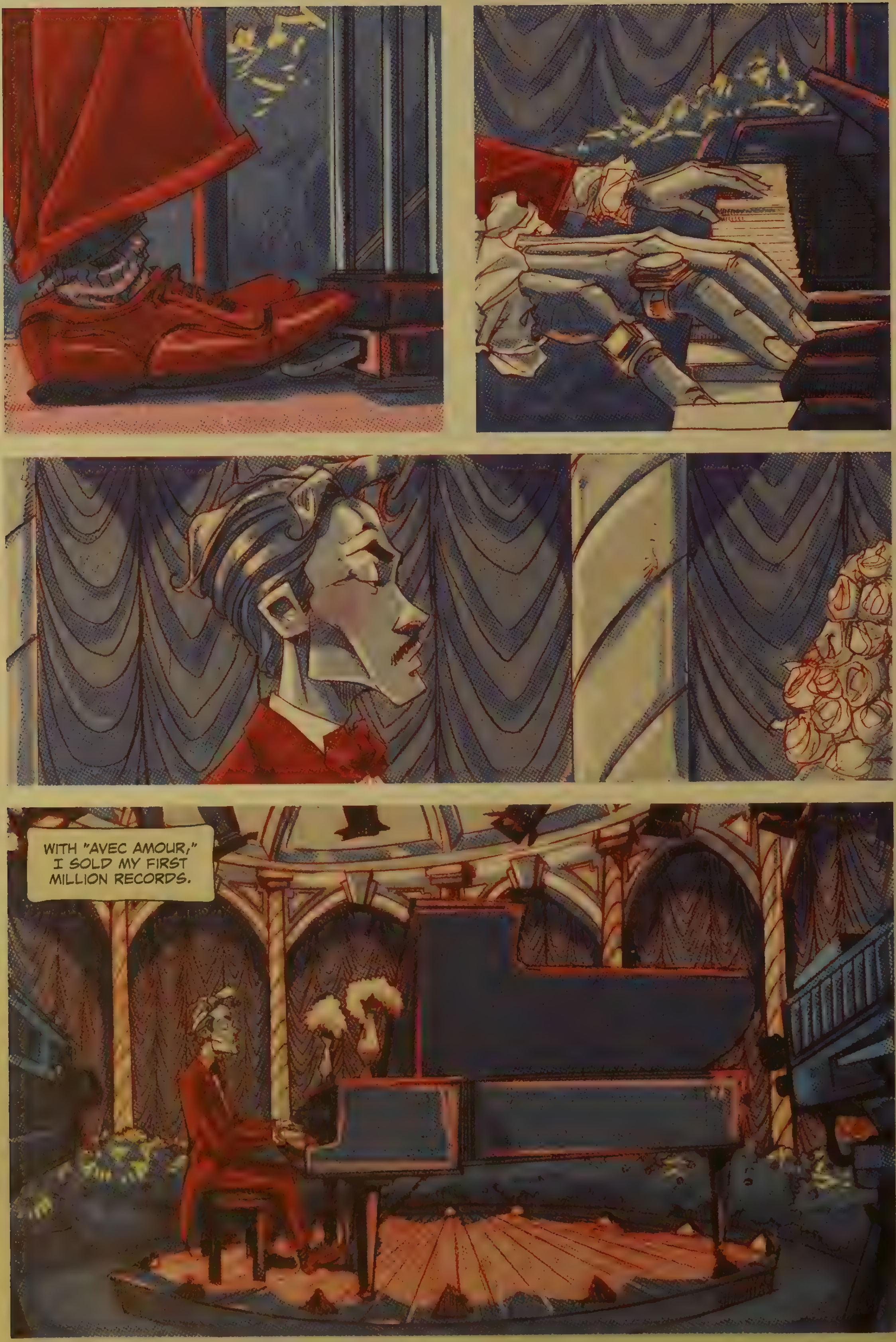

I HAD NOTHING TO LOSE. BESIDES...
WELL, JU?
WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR? SIGN IT!
A COMPTER DE
NTIALITÉ, DE NE RÉVÉLER SON NOM DE NAI
E DU CONTRAT, UN NOM ARTISTIQUE DÉFINI PAR L'AG
Julien Dubois
...I WASN'T EVEN GOING TO USE MY REAL NAME.

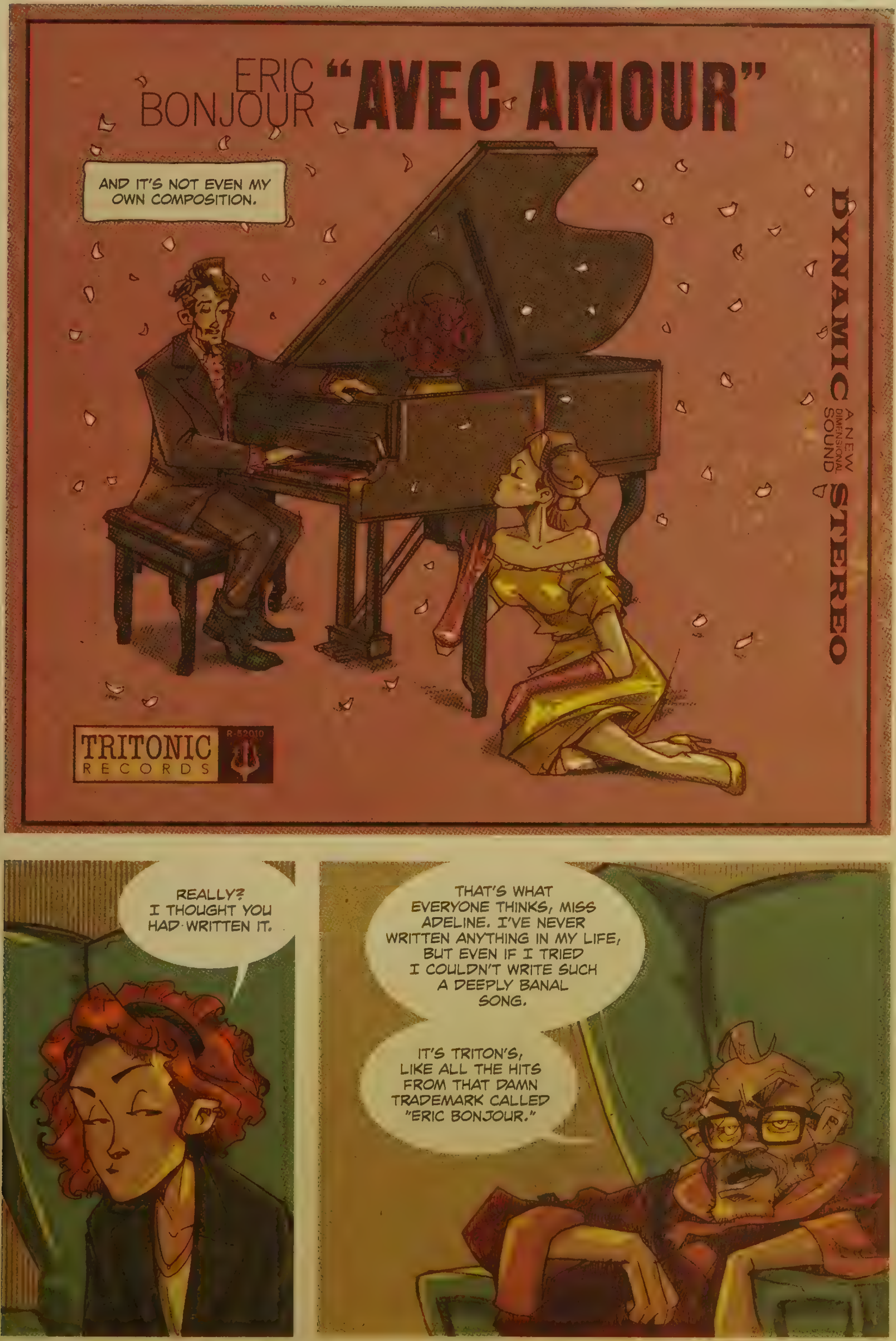

AND THAT'S HOW TRITON BECAME MY AGENT AND PRODUCER...
"AVEC AMOUR"... TAKE *ONE.*
...AND IT ONLY TOOK ONE SONG TO CHANGE EVERYTHING.

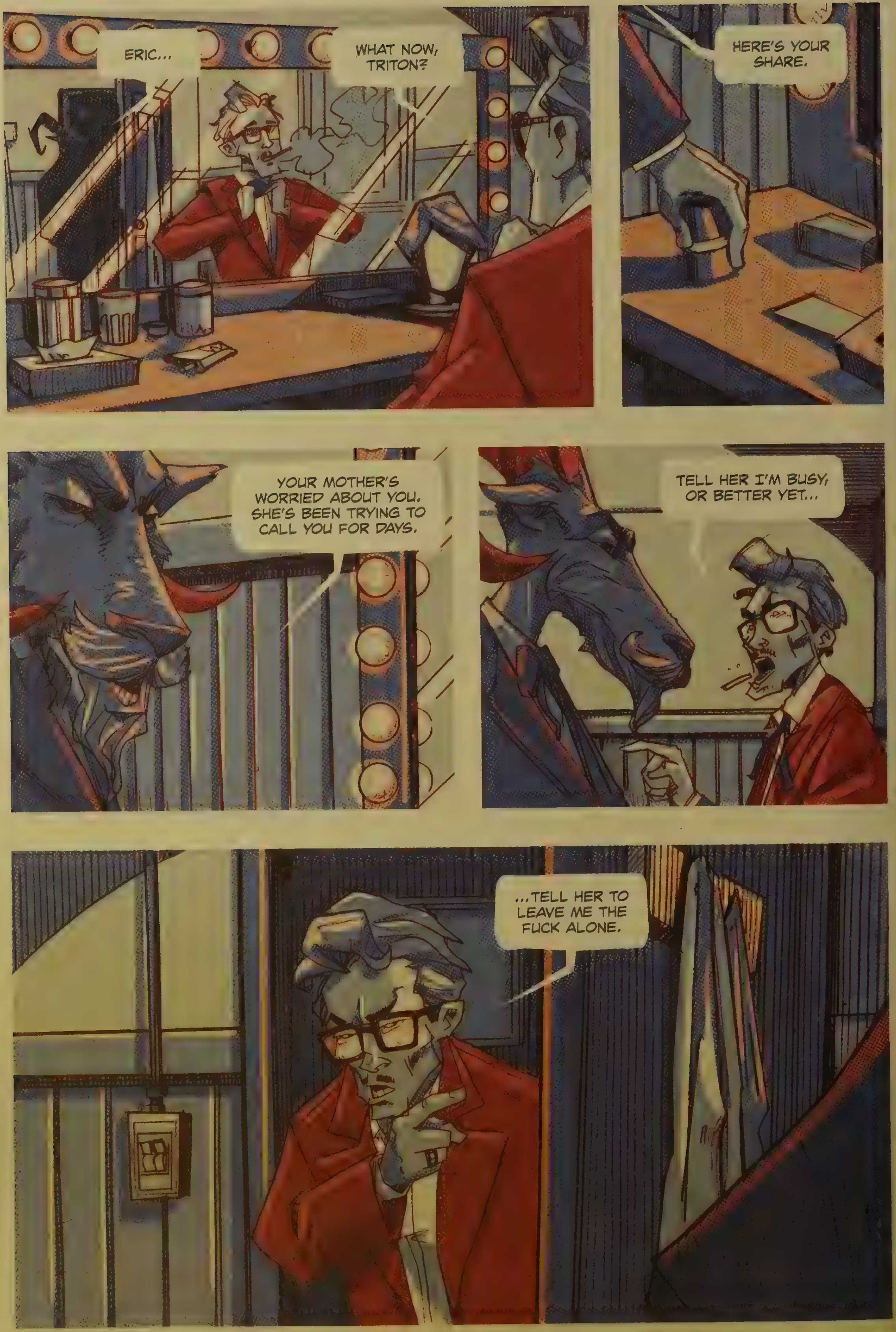

BY SIGNING THAT CONTRACT...
...I GAVE UP MY RIGHT TO MAKE ANY DECISIONS.
JULIEN DUBOIS WAS *DEAD*.
FROM THAT MOMENT ON, I BECAME...

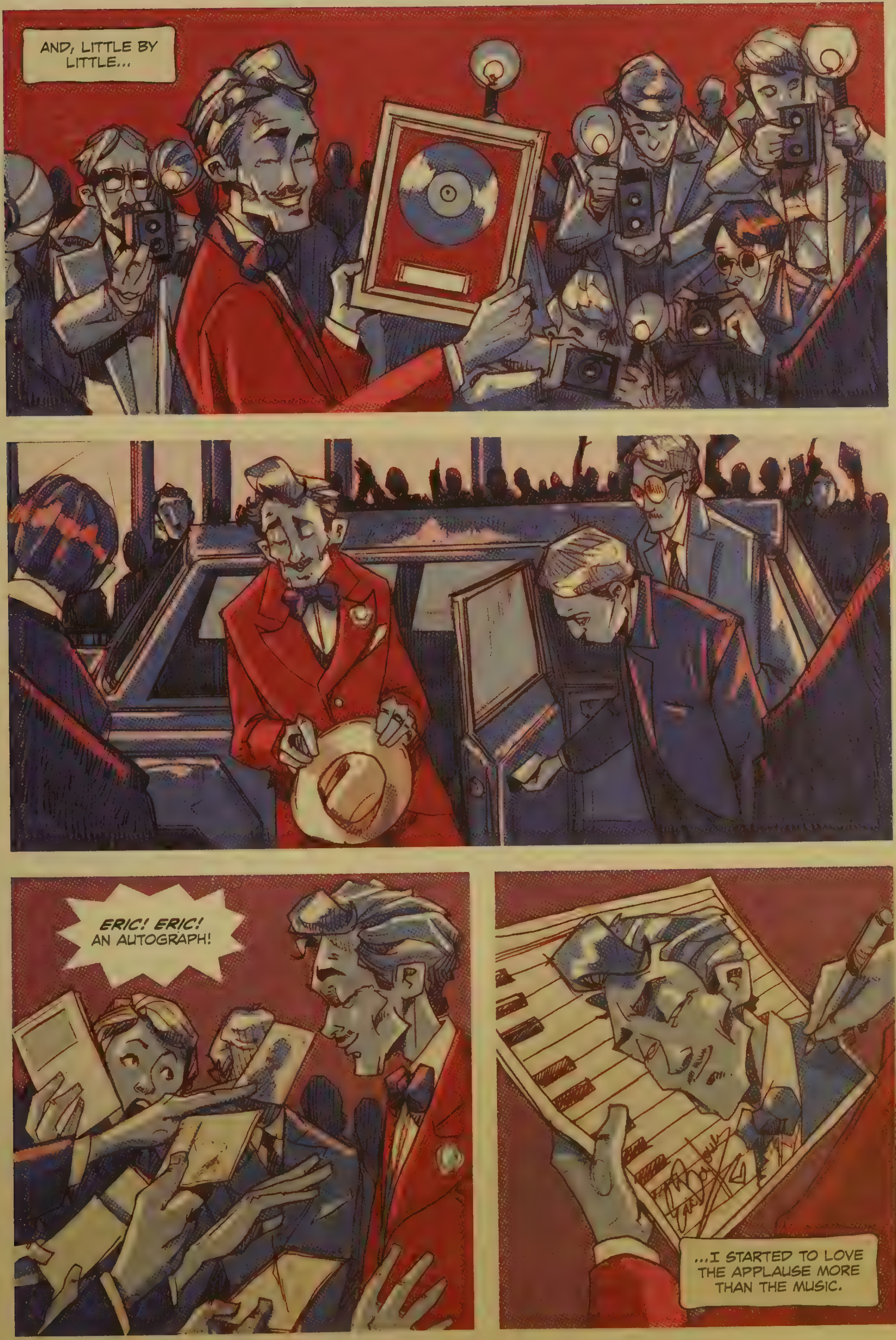
II

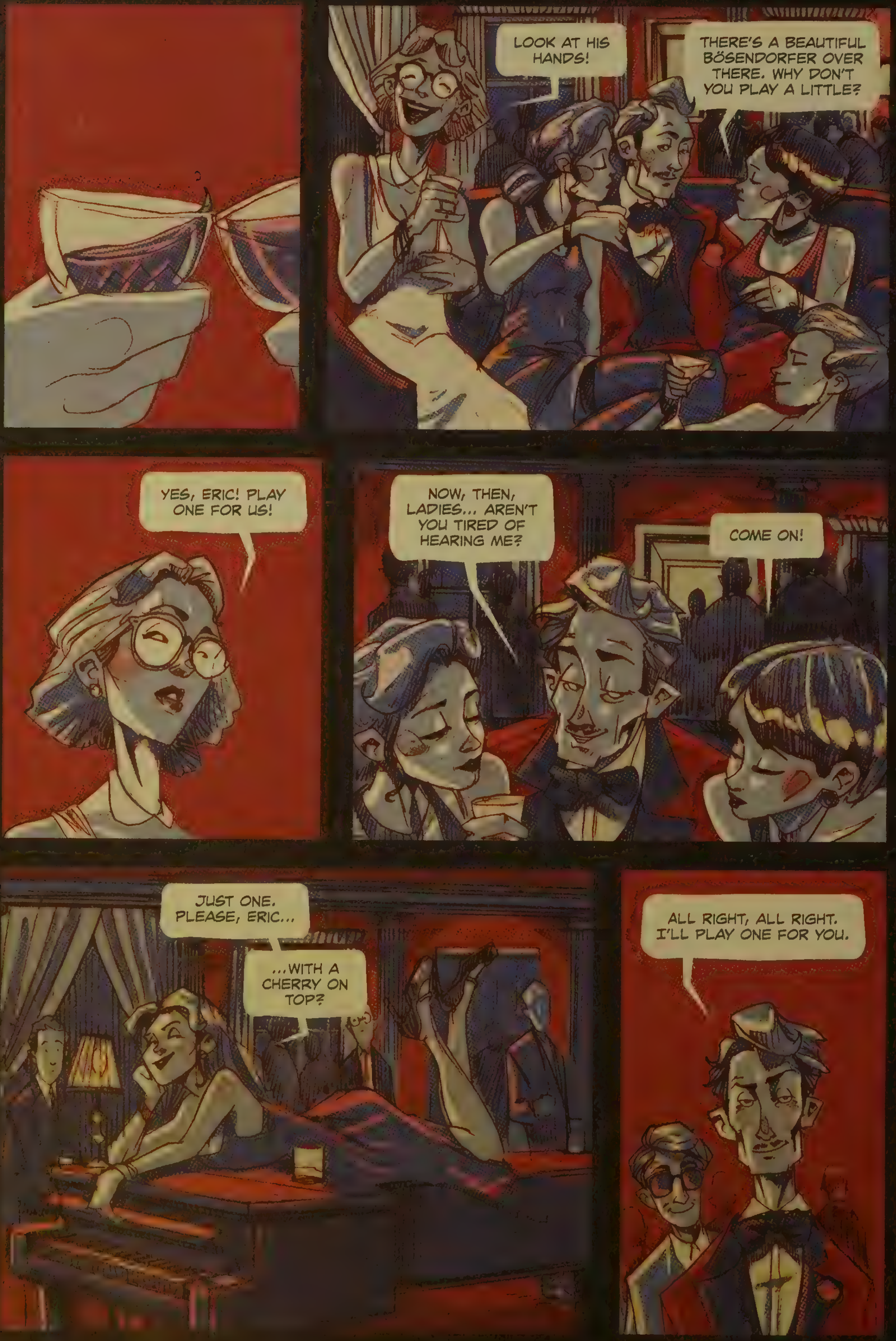
Eric Bonjour

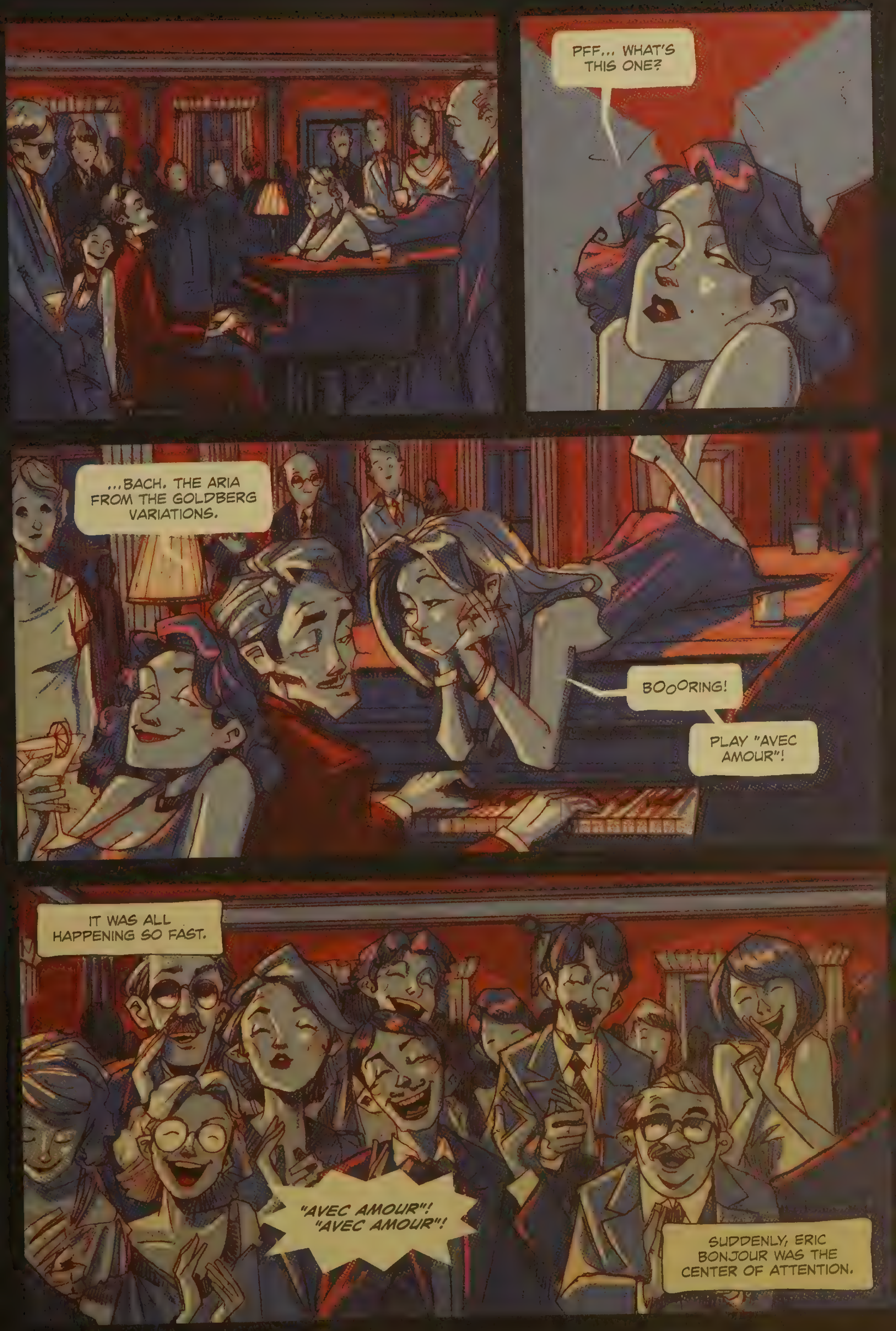

WITH "AVEC AMOUR," I SOLD MY FIRST MILLION RECORDS.

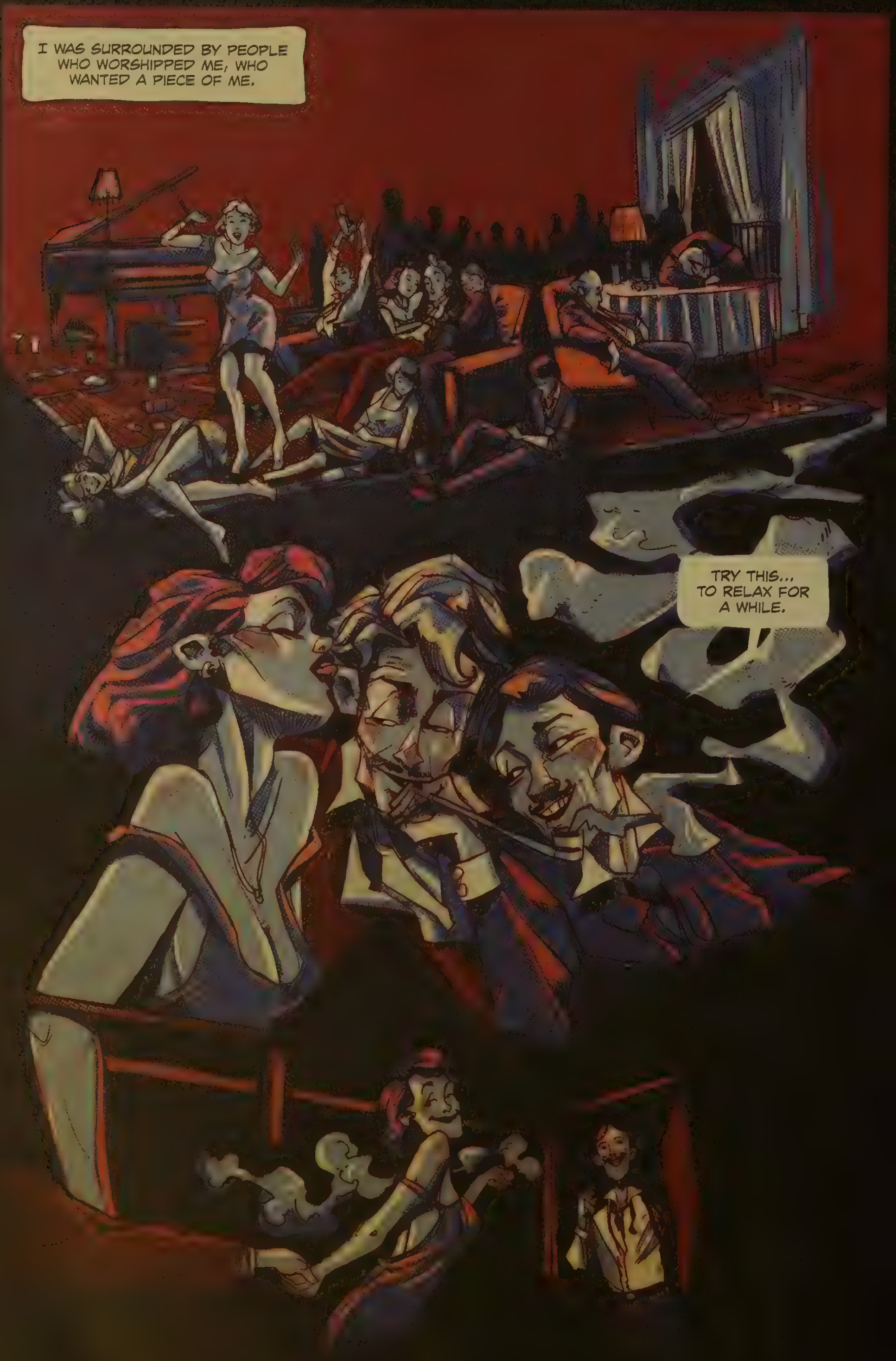

ERIC BONJOUR
"AVEC AMOUR"
DYNAMIC A NEW DIMENSIONAL SOUND STEREO
TRITONIC RECORDS R-52010
AND IT'S NOT EVEN MY OWN COMPOSITION.
REALLY? I THOUGHT YOU HAD WRITTEN IT.
THAT'S WHAT EVERYONE THINKS, MISS ADELINE. I'VE NEVER WRITTEN ANYTHING IN MY LIFE, BUT EVEN IF I TRIED I COULDN'T WRITE SUCH A DEEPLY BANAL SONG.
IT'S TRITON'S, LIKE ALL THE HITS FROM THAT DAMN TRADEMARK CALLED "ERIC BONJOUR."

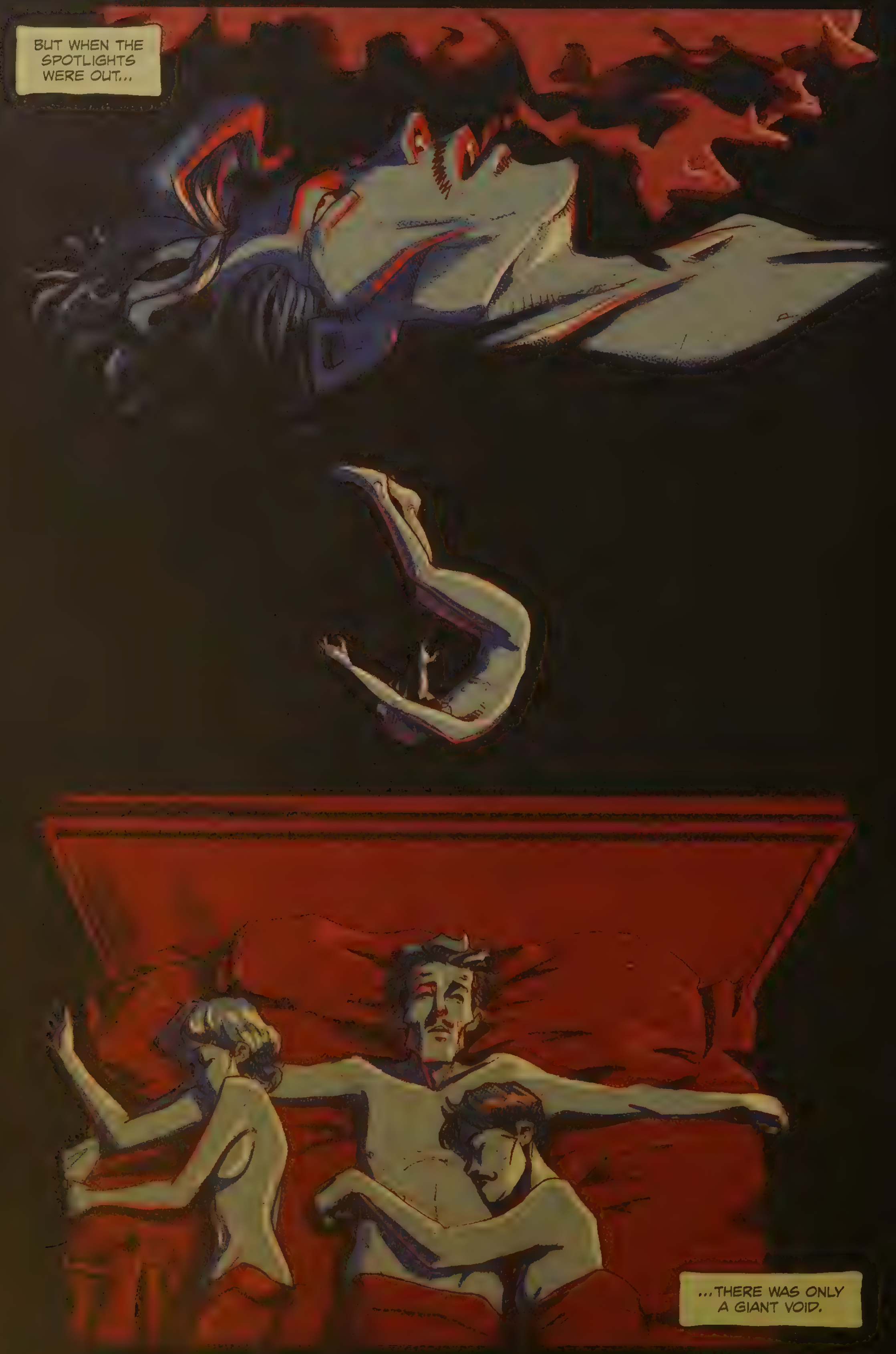

ERIC...
WHAT NOW, TRITON?
HERE'S YOUR SHARE.
YOUR MOTHER'S WORRIED ABOUT YOU. SHE'S BEEN TRYING TO CALL YOU FOR DAYS.
TELL HER I'M BUSY, OR BETTER YET...
...TELL HER TO LEAVE ME THE FUCK ALONE.

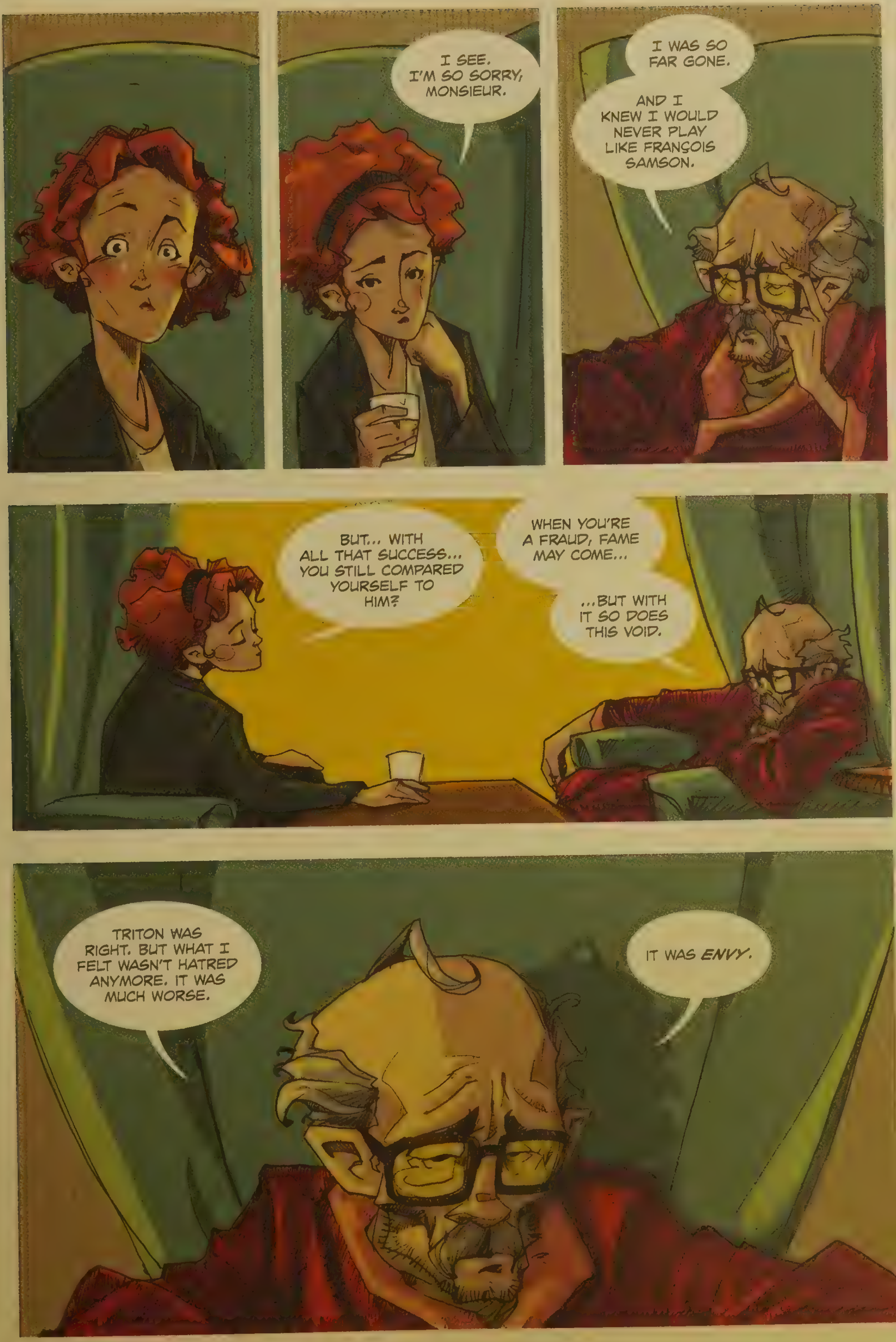

AND, LITTLE BY LITTLE...
ERIC! ERIC! AN AUTOGRAPH!
...I STARTED TO LOVE THE APPLAUSE MORE THAN THE MUSIC.

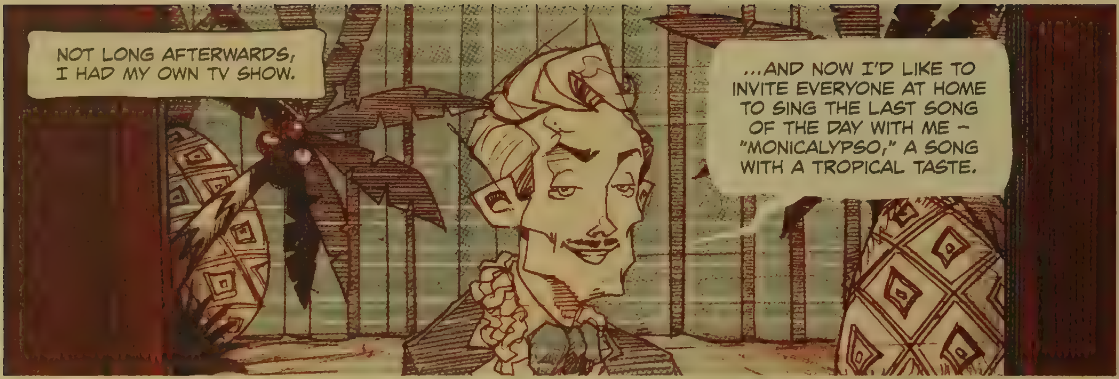

LOOK AT HIS HANDS!
THERE'S A BEAUTIFUL BÖSENDORFER OVER THERE. WHY DON'T YOU PLAY A LITTLE?
YES, ERIC! PLAY ONE FOR US!
NOW, THEN, LADIES... AREN'T YOU TIRED OF HEARING ME?
COME ON!
JUST ONE. PLEASE, ERIC...
...WITH A CHERRY ON TOP?
ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT. I'LL PLAY ONE FOR YOU.

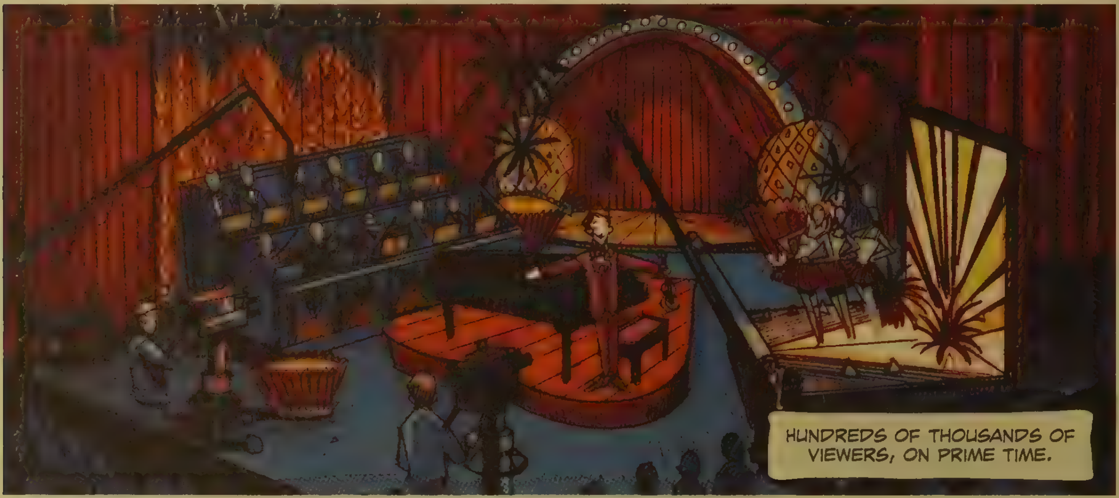

PFF... WHAT'S THIS ONE?
...BACH. THE ARIA FROM THE GOLDBERG VARIATIONS.
BOOORING!
PLAY "AVEC AMOUR"!
IT WAS ALL HAPPENING SO FAST.
"AVEC AMOUR"! "AVEC AMOUR"!
SUDDENLY, ERIC BONJOUR WAS THE CENTER OF ATTENTION.

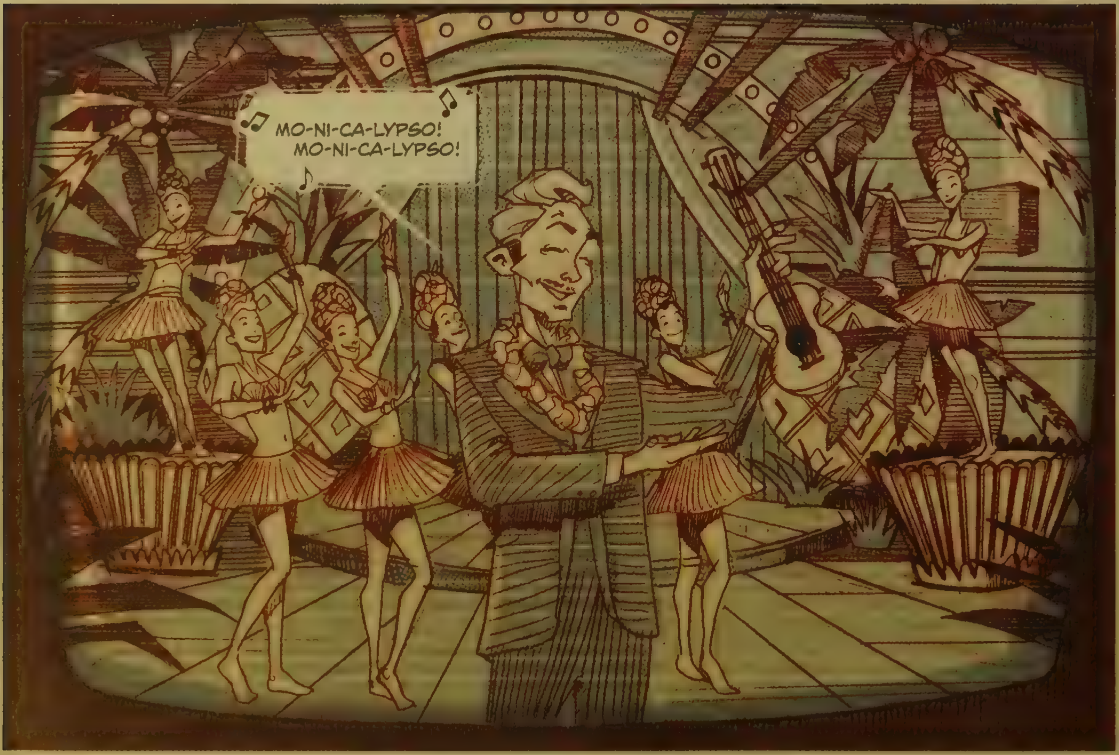

I WAS SURROUNDED BY PEOPLE WHO WORSHIPPED ME, WHO WANTED A PIECE OF ME.
TRY THIS... TO RELAX FOR A WHILE.

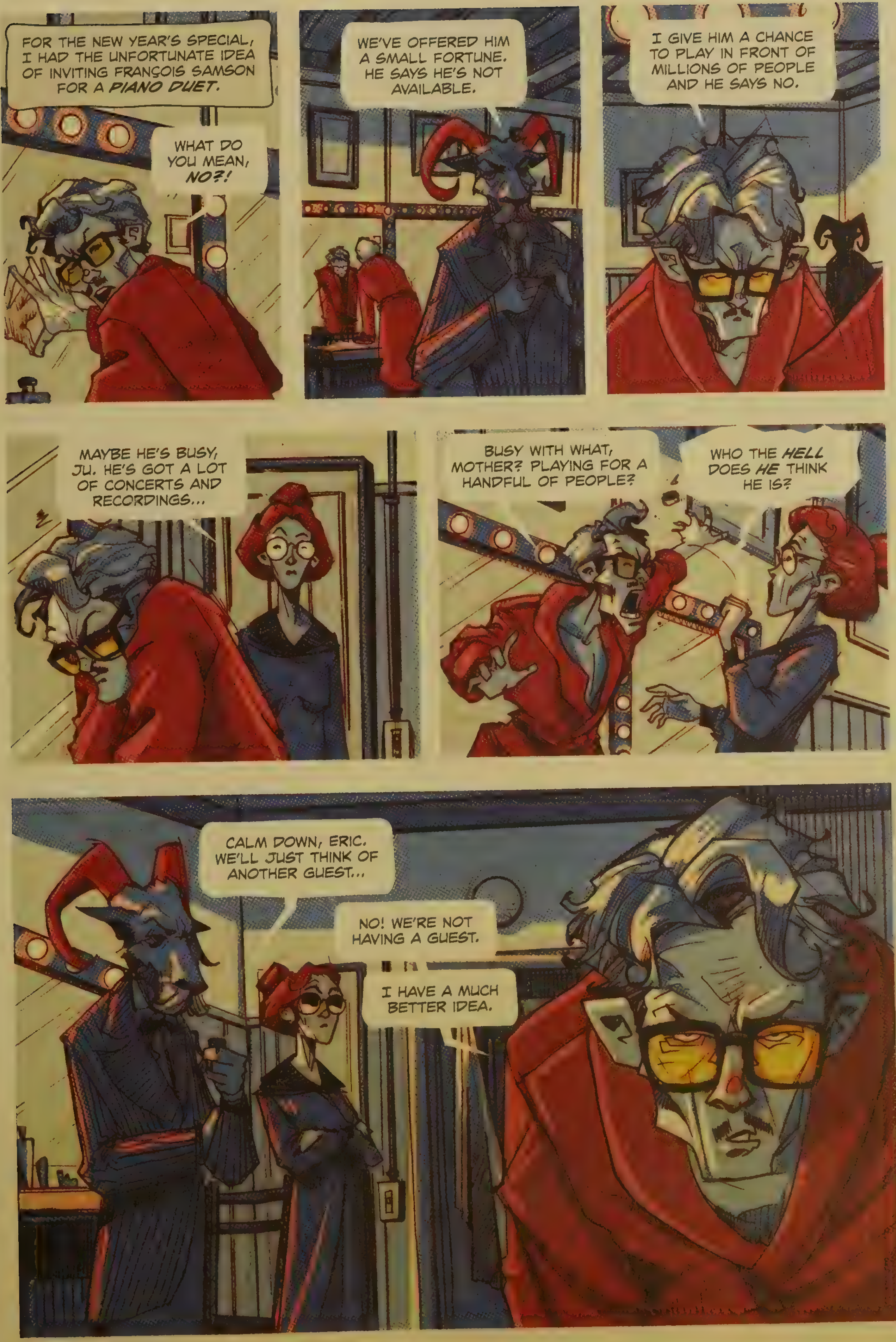

BUT WHEN THE SPOTLIGHTS WERE OUT...
...THERE WAS ONLY A GIANT VOID.

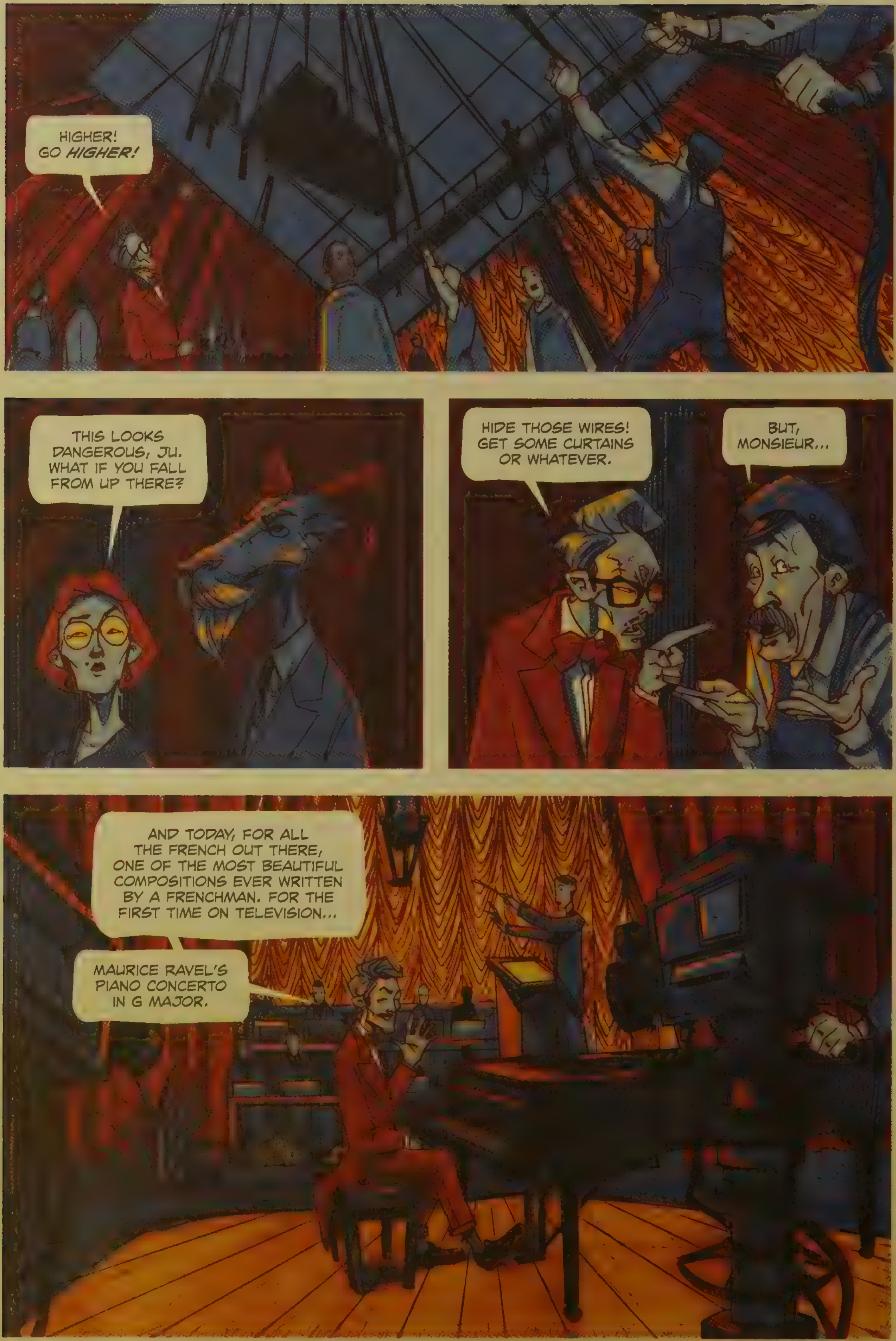

I SEE. I'M SO SORRY, MONSIEUR.
I WAS SO FAR GONE.
AND I KNEW I WOULD NEVER PLAY LIKE FRANÇOIS SAMSON.
BUT... WITH ALL THAT SUCCESS... YOU STILL COMPARED YOURSELF TO HIM?
WHEN YOU'RE A FRAUD, FAME MAY COME...
...BUT WITH IT SO DOES THIS VOID.
TRITON WAS RIGHT. BUT WHAT I FELT WASN'T HATRED ANYMORE. IT WAS MUCH WORSE.
IT WAS *ENVY*.

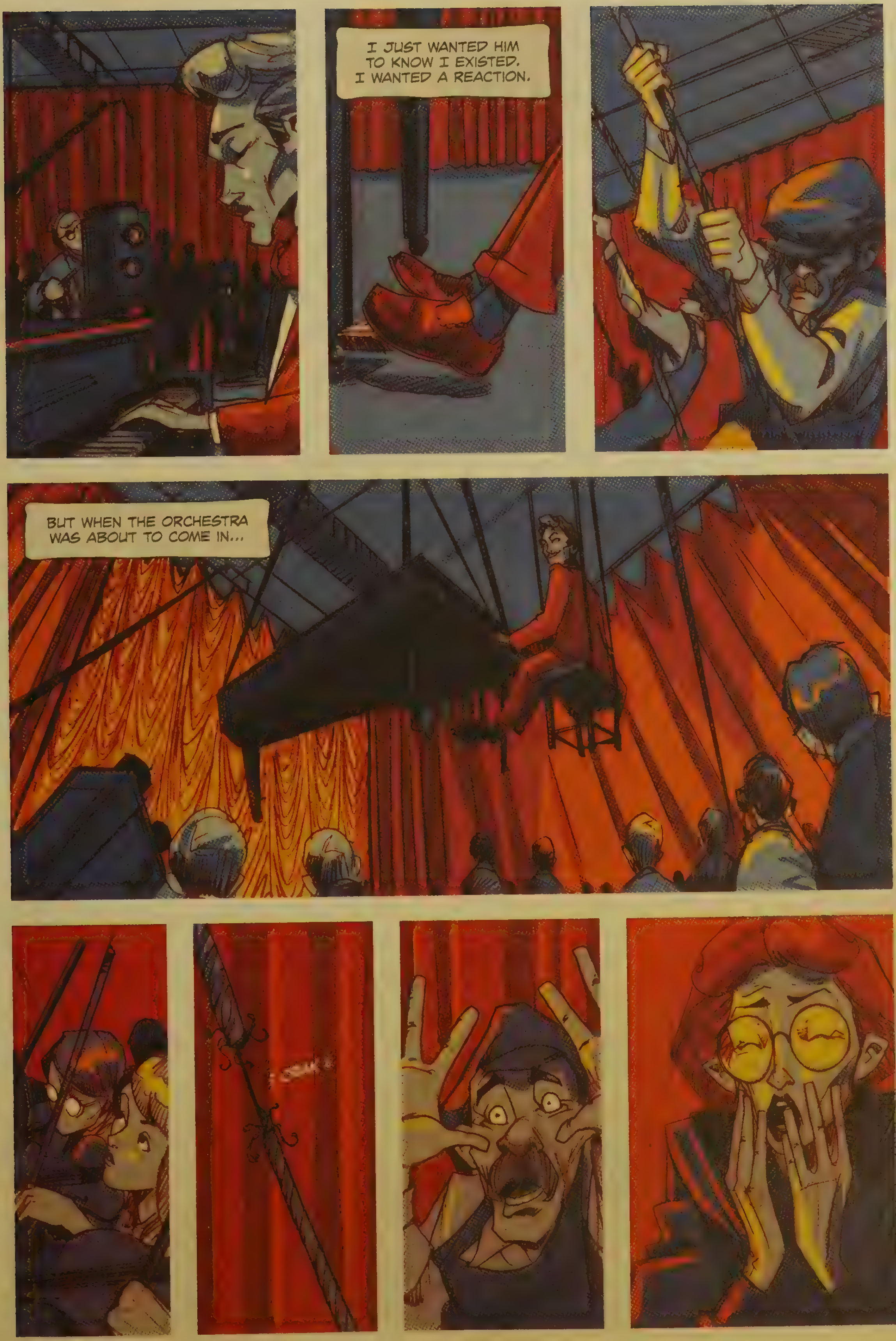

NOT LONG AFTERWARDS, I HAD MY OWN TV SHOW.
...AND NOW I'D LIKE TO INVITE EVERYONE AT HOME TO SING THE LAST SONG OF THE DAY WITH ME – "MONICALYPSO," A SONG WITH A TROPICAL TASTE.

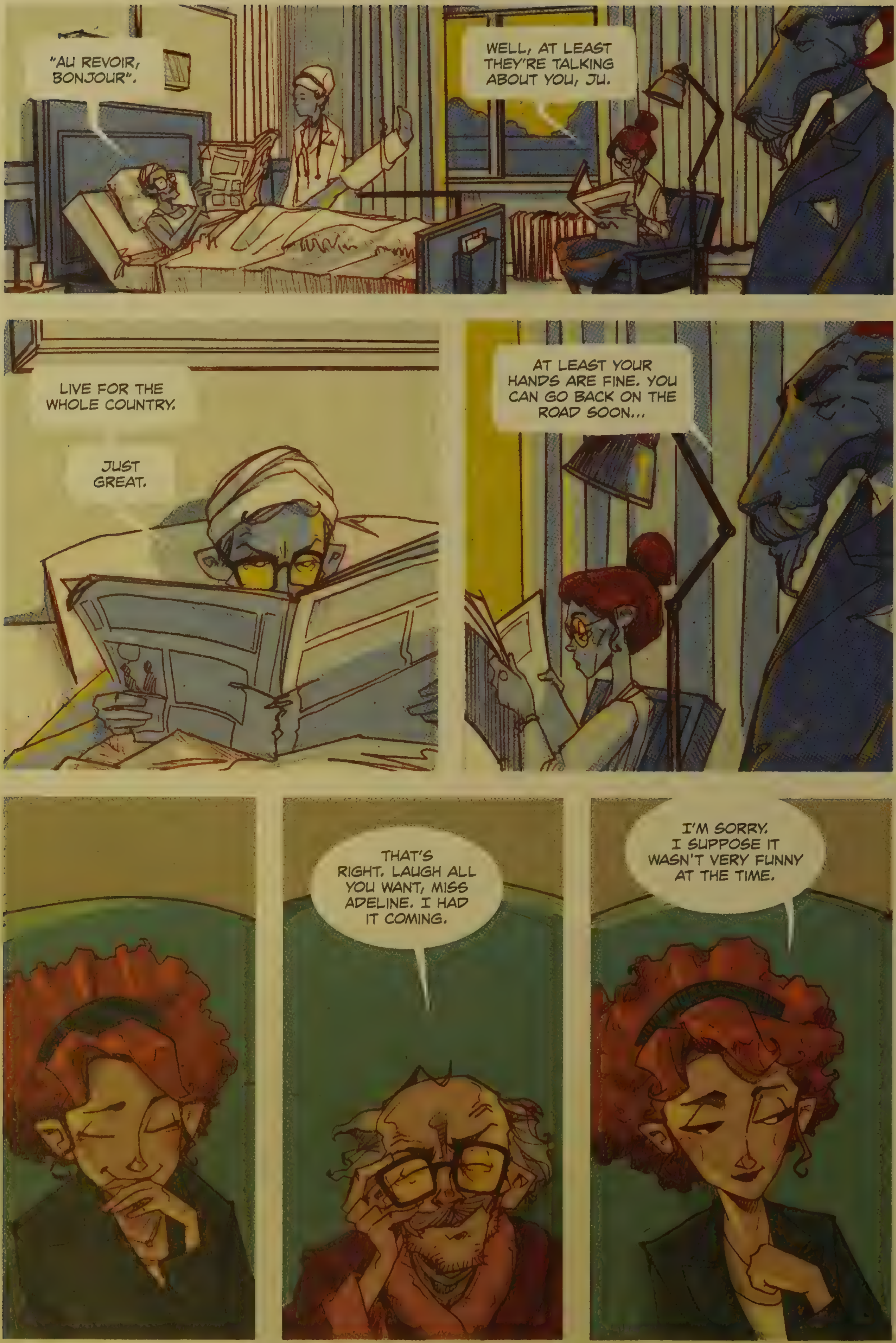

HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF VIEWERS, ON PRIME TIME.

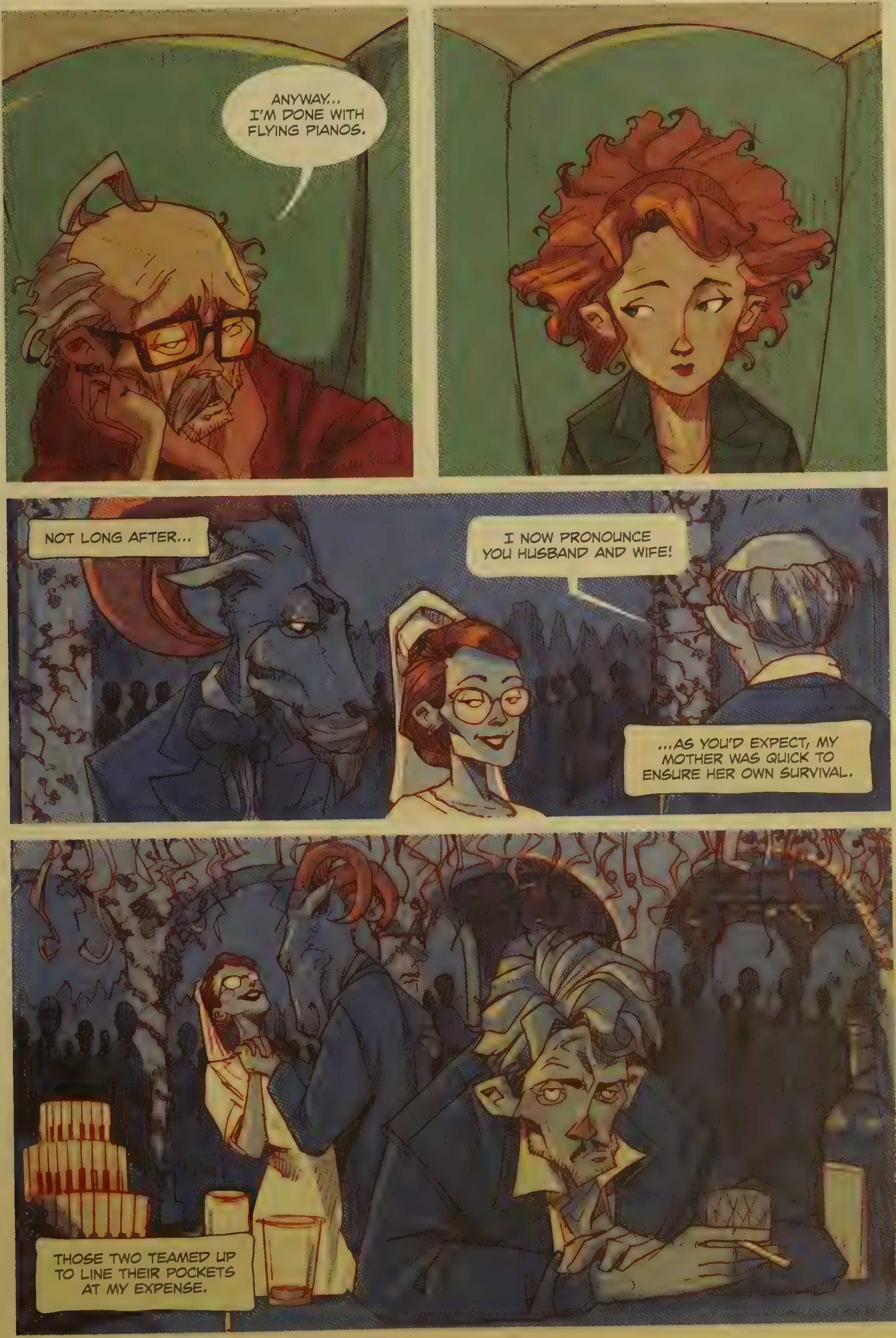

♫ MO-NI-CA-LYPSO! MO-NI-CA-LYPSO! ♪

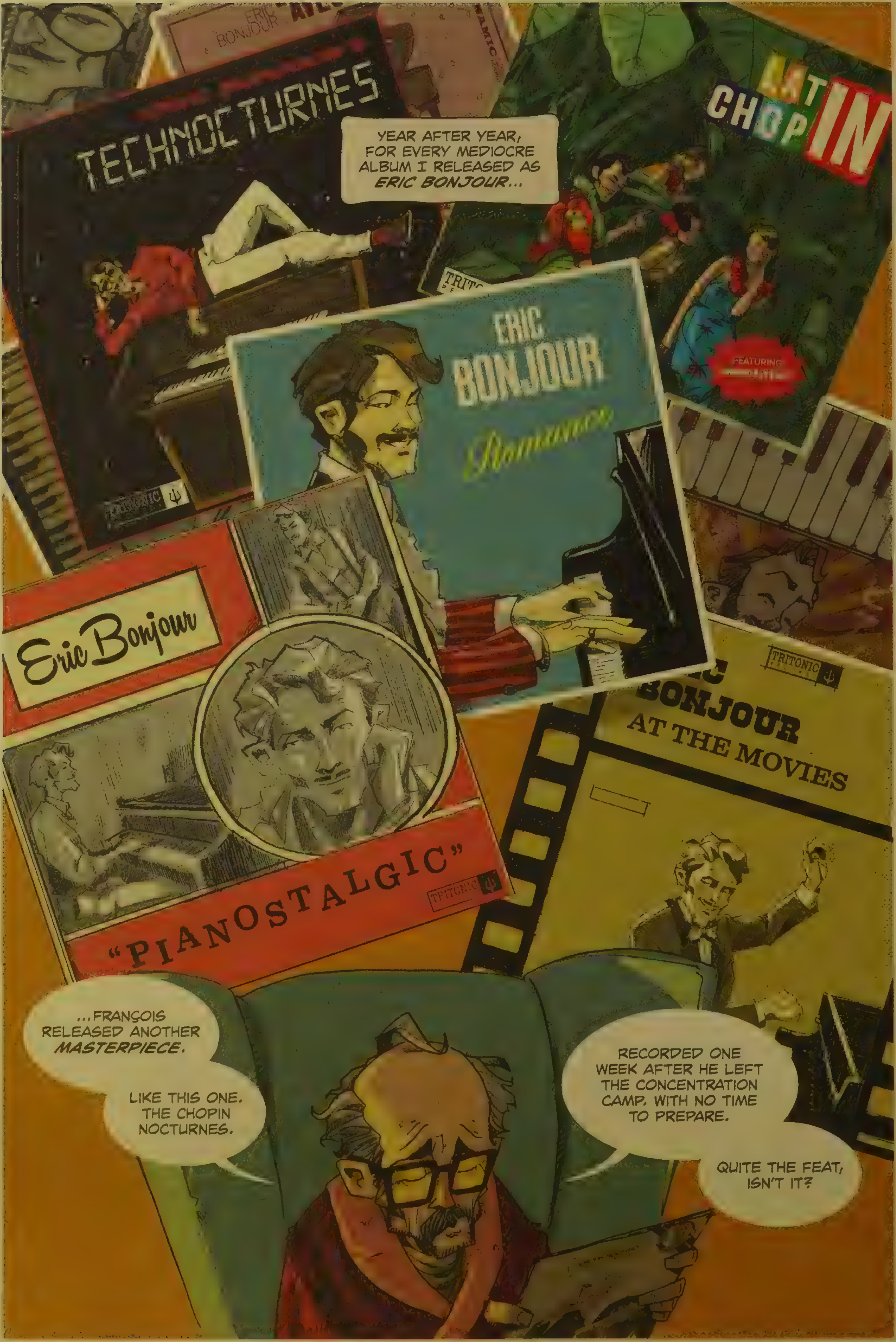

FOR THE NEW YEAR'S SPECIAL, I HAD THE UNFORTUNATE IDEA OF INVITING FRANÇOIS SAMSON FOR A *PIANO DUET*.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, *NO?!*
WE'VE OFFERED HIM A SMALL FORTUNE. HE SAYS HE'S NOT AVAILABLE.
I GIVE HIM A CHANCE TO PLAY IN FRONT OF MILLIONS OF PEOPLE AND HE SAYS NO.
MAYBE HE'S BUSY, JU. HE'S GOT A LOT OF CONCERTS AND RECORDINGS...
BUSY WITH WHAT, MOTHER? PLAYING FOR A HANDFUL OF PEOPLE?
WHO THE *HELL* DOES *HE* THINK HE IS?
CALM DOWN, ERIC. WE'LL JUST THINK OF ANOTHER GUEST...
NO! WE'RE NOT HAVING A GUEST.
I HAVE A MUCH BETTER IDEA.

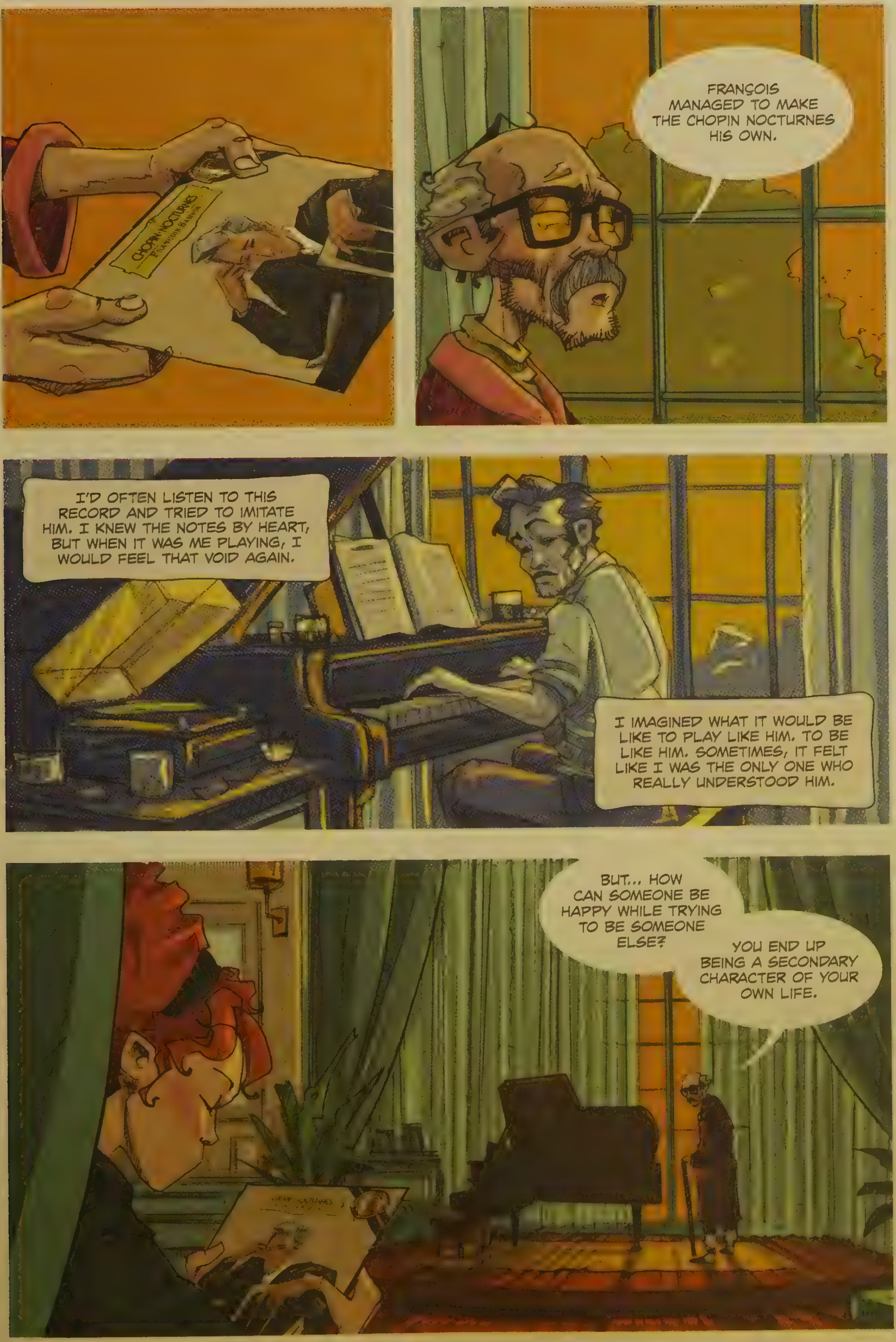

HIGHER! GO *HIGHER!*
THIS LOOKS DANGEROUS, JU. WHAT IF YOU FALL FROM UP THERE?
HIDE THOSE WIRES! GET SOME CURTAINS OR WHATEVER.
BUT, MONSIEUR...
AND TODAY, FOR ALL THE FRENCH OUT THERE, ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL COMPOSITIONS EVER WRITTEN BY A FRENCHMAN. FOR THE FIRST TIME ON TELEVISION...
MAURICE RAVEL'S PIANO CONCERTO IN G MAJOR.

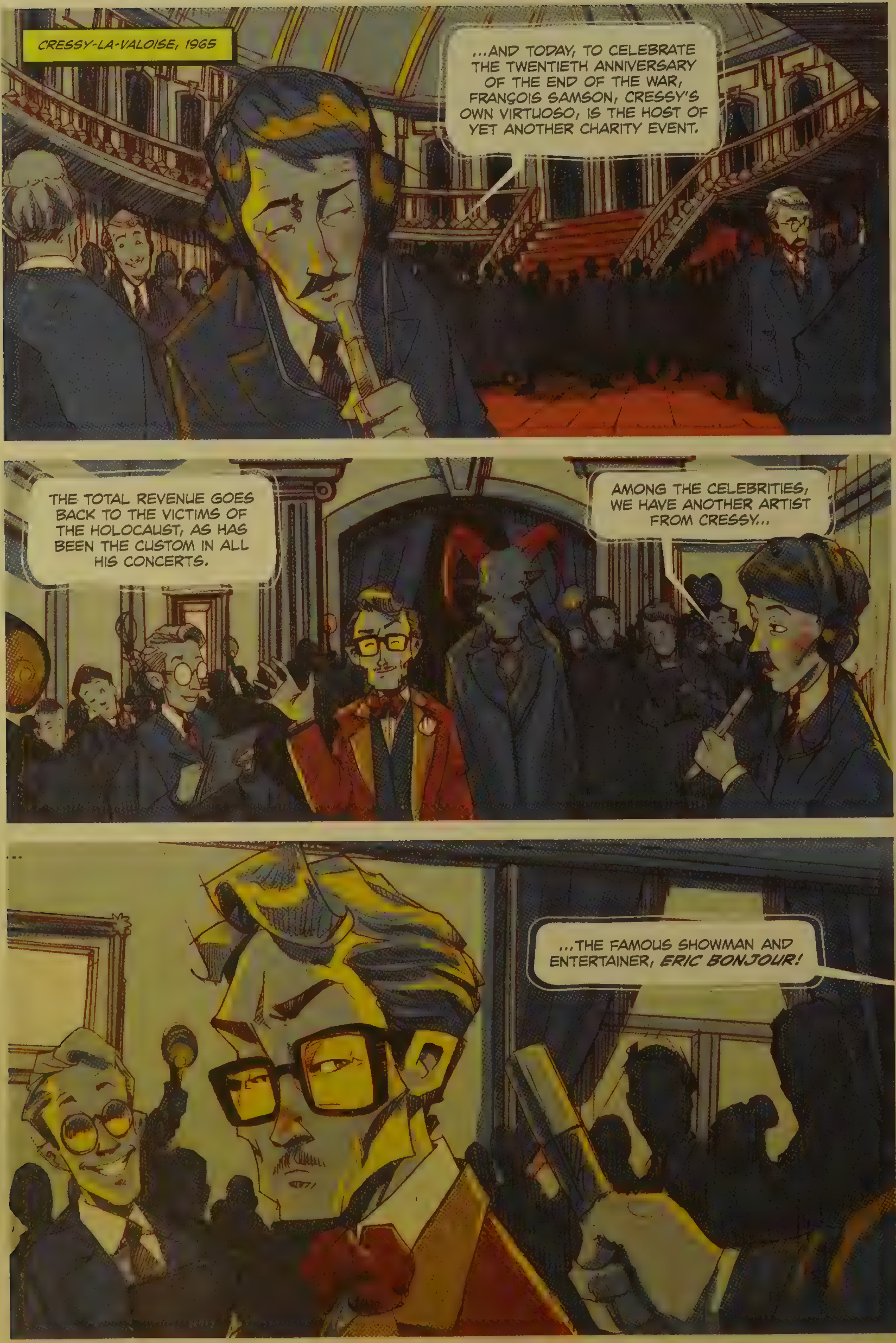

I JUST WANTED HIM TO KNOW I EXISTED. I WANTED A REACTION.
BUT WHEN THE ORCHESTRA WAS ABOUT TO COME IN...

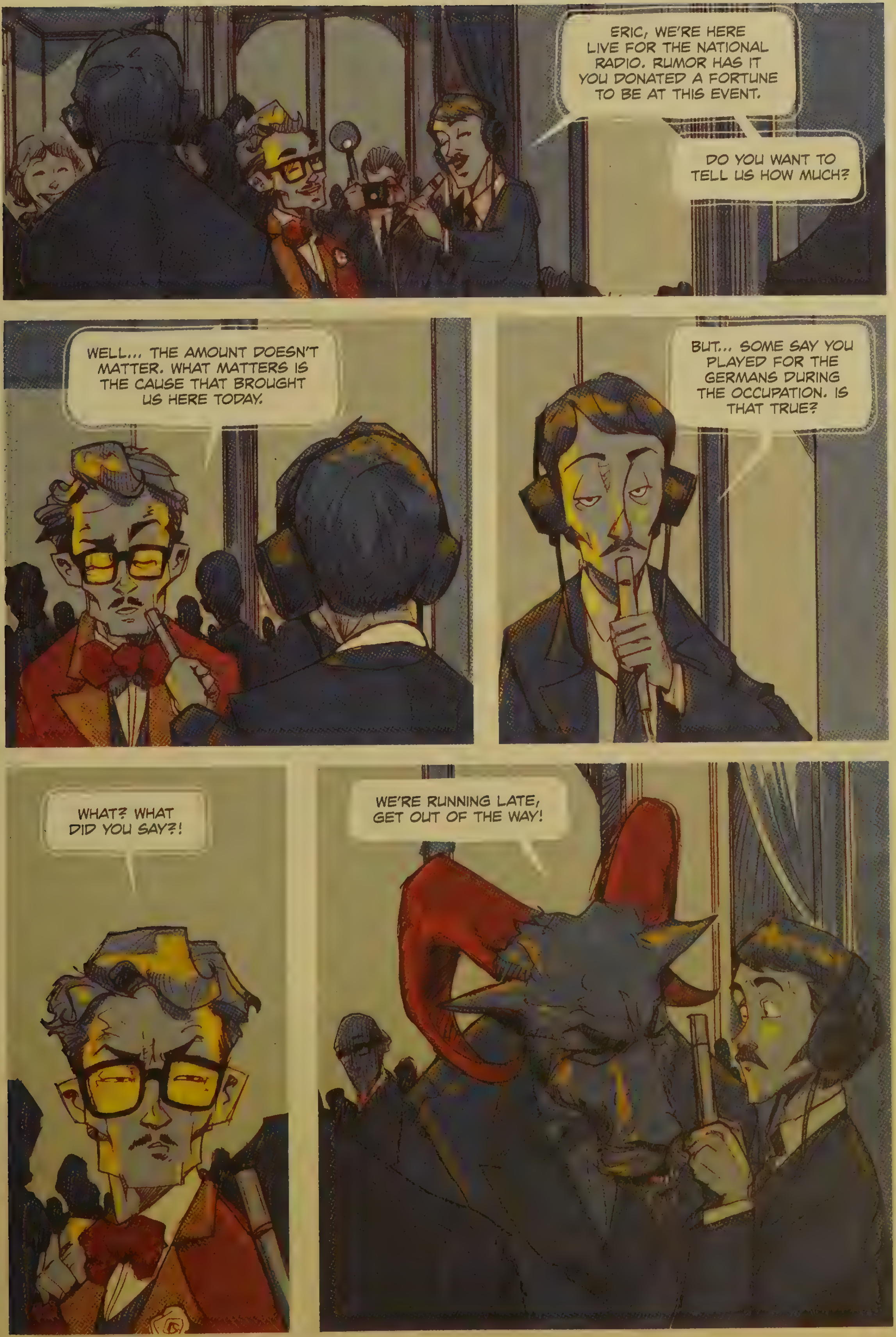

"AU REVOIR, BONJOUR".
WELL, AT LEAST THEY'RE TALKING ABOUT YOU, JU.
LIVE FOR THE WHOLE COUNTRY.
JUST GREAT.
AT LEAST YOUR HANDS ARE FINE. YOU CAN GO BACK ON THE ROAD SOON...
THAT'S RIGHT. LAUGH ALL YOU WANT, MISS ADELINE. I HAD IT COMING.
I'M SORRY. I SUPPOSE IT WASN'T VERY FUNNY AT THE TIME.

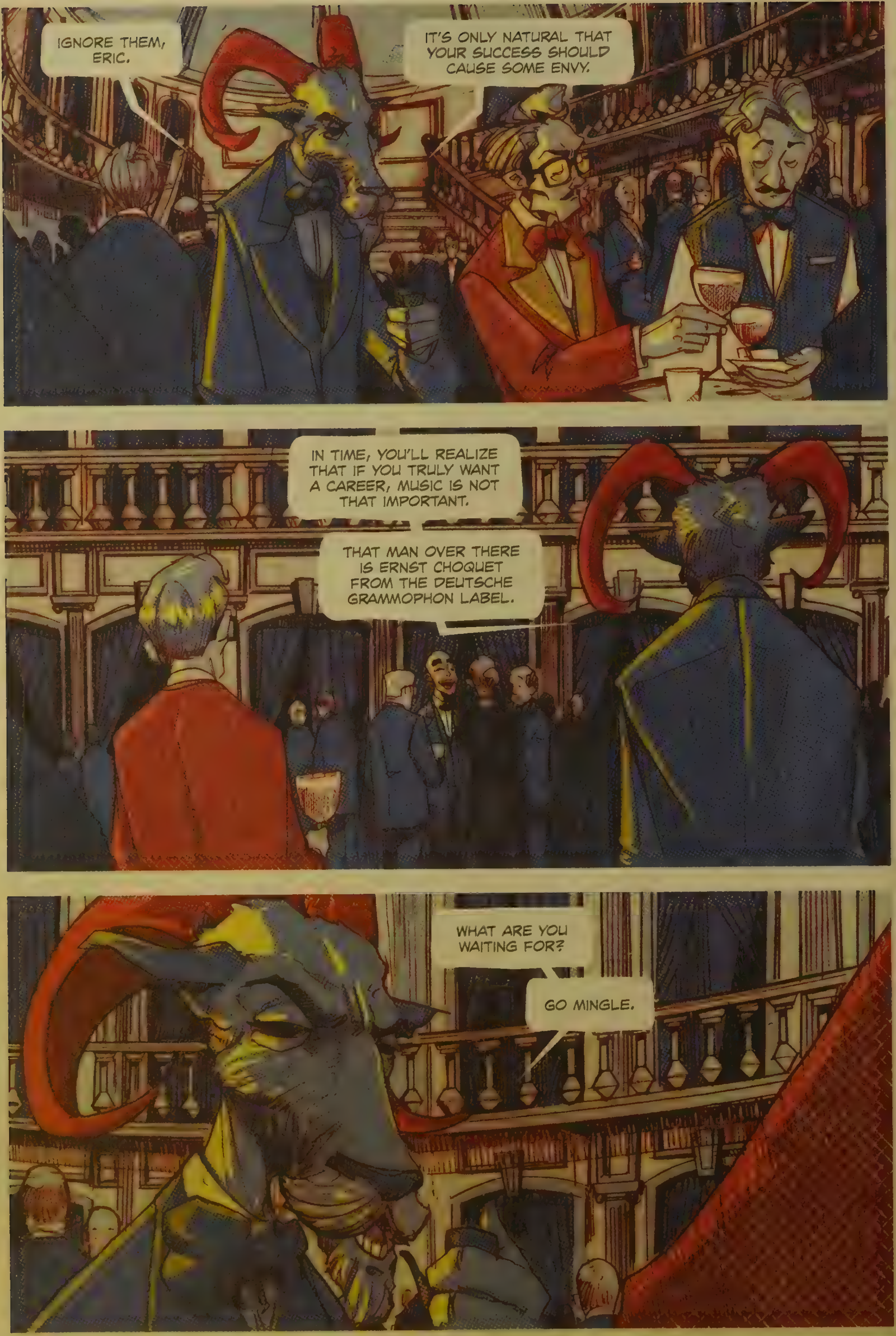

ANYWAY... I'M DONE WITH FLYING PIANOS.
NOT LONG AFTER...
I NOW PRONOUNCE YOU HUSBAND AND WIFE!
...AS YOU'D EXPECT, MY MOTHER WAS QUICK TO ENSURE HER OWN SURVIVAL.
THOSE TWO TEAMED UP TO LINE THEIR POCKETS AT MY EXPENSE.

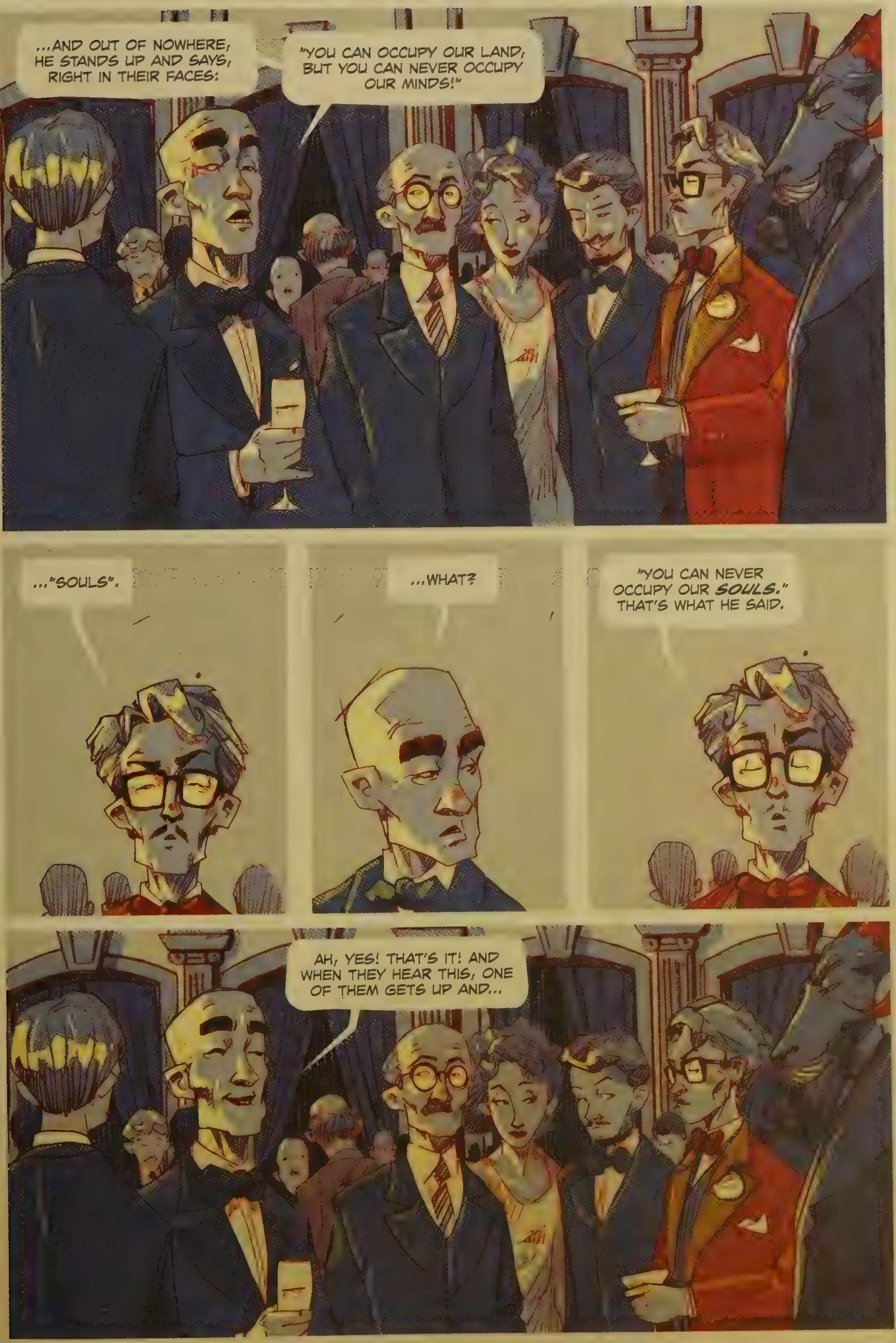

ERIC BONJOUR
TECHNOCTURNES
YEAR AFTER YEAR, FOR EVERY MEDIOCRE ALBUM I RELEASED AS *ERIC BONJOUR*...
CHOP IN
TRITONIC
FEATURING
ERIC BONJOUR
Romance
Eric Bonjour
"PIANOSTALGIC"
TRITONIC
BONJOUR
AT THE MOVIES
TRITONIC
...FRANÇOIS RELEASED ANOTHER *MASTERPIECE*.
LIKE THIS ONE. THE CHOPIN NOCTURNES.
RECORDED ONE WEEK AFTER HE LEFT THE CONCENTRATION CAMP. WITH NO TIME TO PREPARE.
QUITE THE FEAT, ISN'T IT?

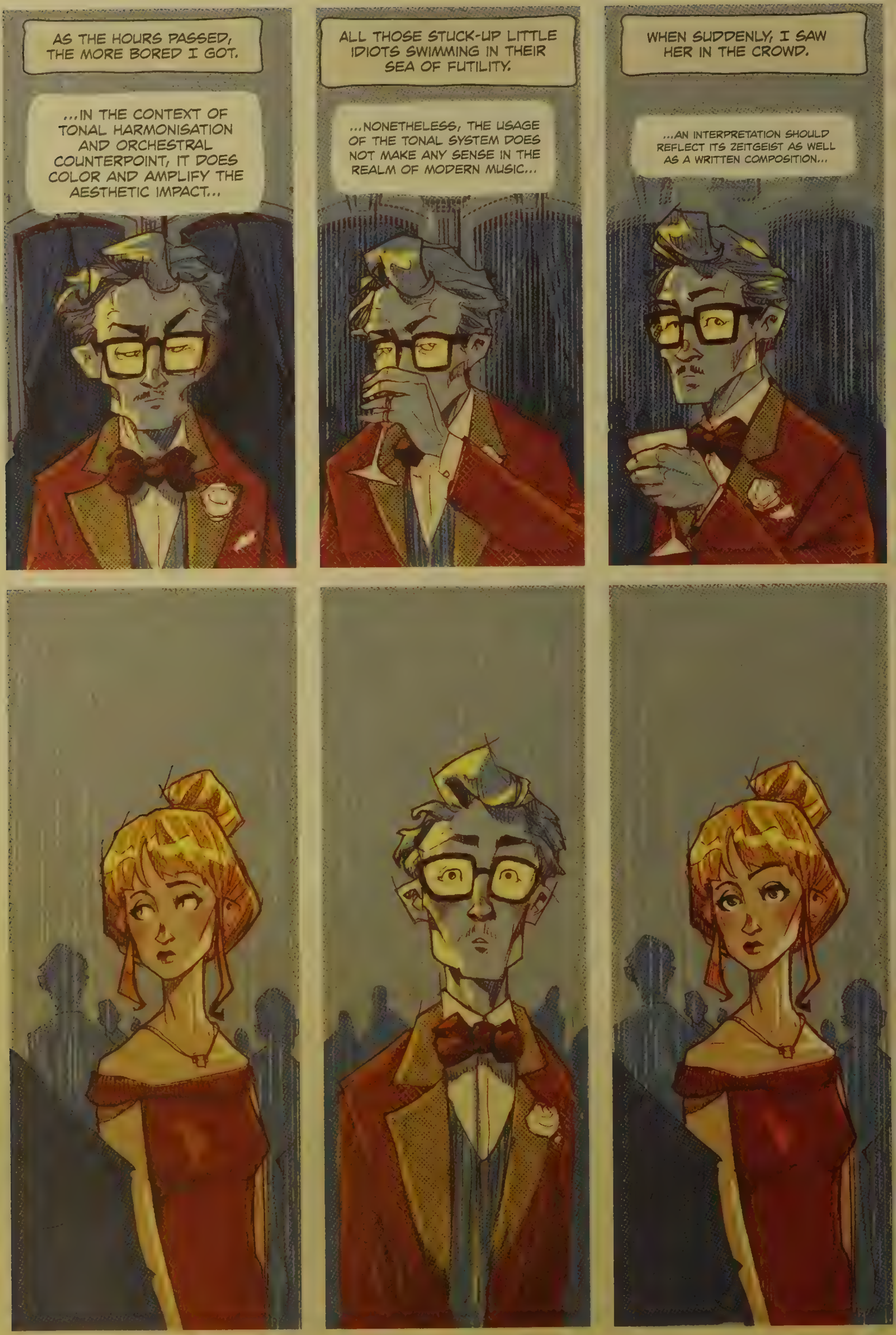

CHOPIN·NOCTURNES
FRANÇOIS SAMSON
FRANÇOIS MANAGED TO MAKE THE CHOPIN NOCTURNES HIS OWN.
I'D OFTEN LISTEN TO THIS RECORD AND TRIED TO IMITATE HIM. I KNEW THE NOTES BY HEART, BUT WHEN IT WAS ME PLAYING, I WOULD FEEL THAT VOID AGAIN.
I IMAGINED WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE TO PLAY LIKE HIM. TO BE LIKE HIM. SOMETIMES, IT FELT LIKE I WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO REALLY UNDERSTOOD HIM.
BUT... HOW CAN SOMEONE BE HAPPY WHILE TRYING TO BE SOMEONE ELSE?
YOU END UP BEING A SECONDARY CHARACTER OF YOUR OWN LIFE.

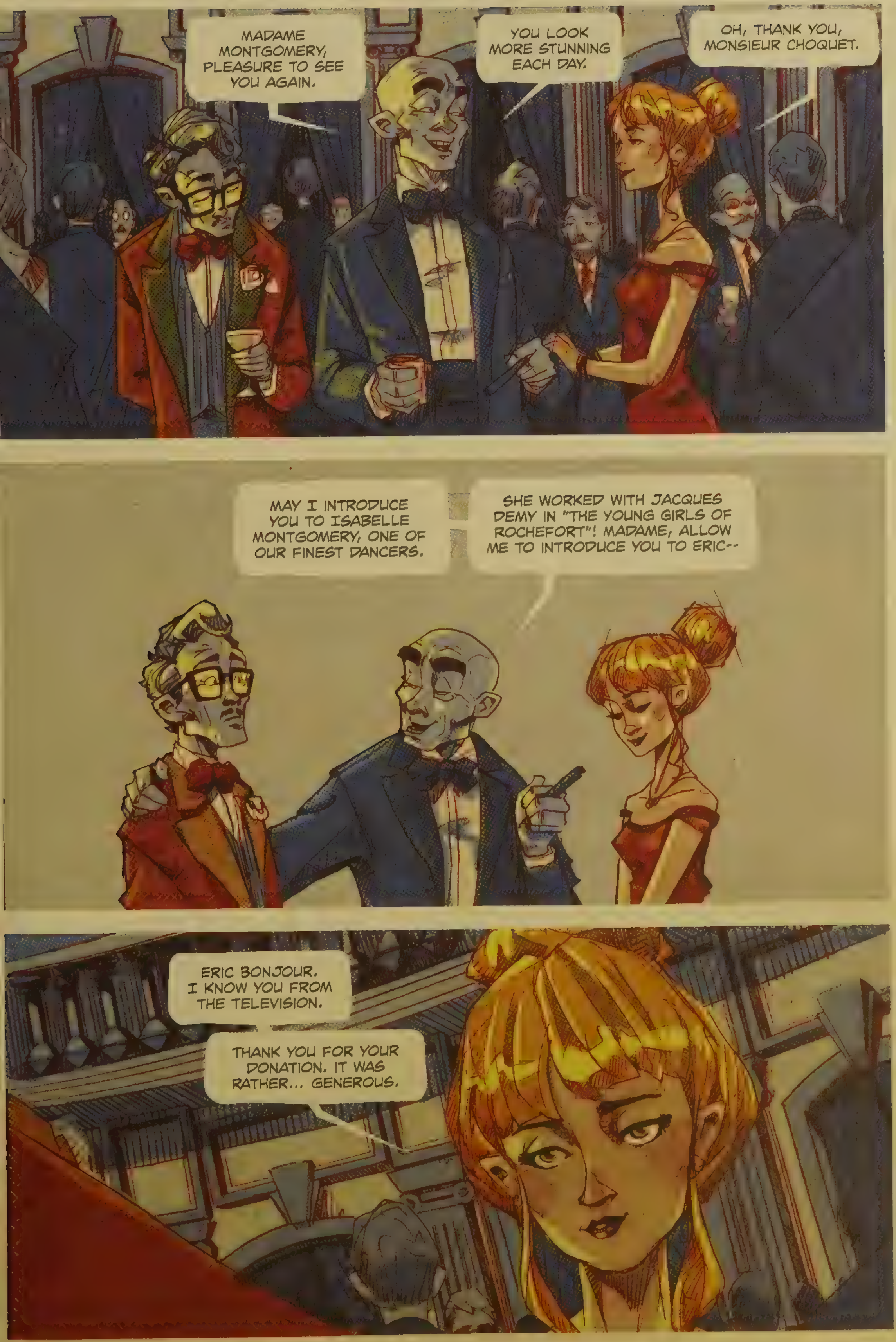

CRESSY-LA-VALOISE, 1965
...AND TODAY, TO CELEBRATE THE TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE END OF THE WAR, FRANÇOIS SAMSON, CRESSY'S OWN VIRTUOSO, IS THE HOST OF YET ANOTHER CHARITY EVENT.
THE TOTAL REVENUE GOES BACK TO THE VICTIMS OF THE HOLOCAUST, AS HAS BEEN THE CUSTOM IN ALL HIS CONCERTS.
AMONG THE CELEBRITIES, WE HAVE ANOTHER ARTIST FROM CRESSY...
...THE FAMOUS SHOWMAN AND ENTERTAINER, ERIC BONJOUR!

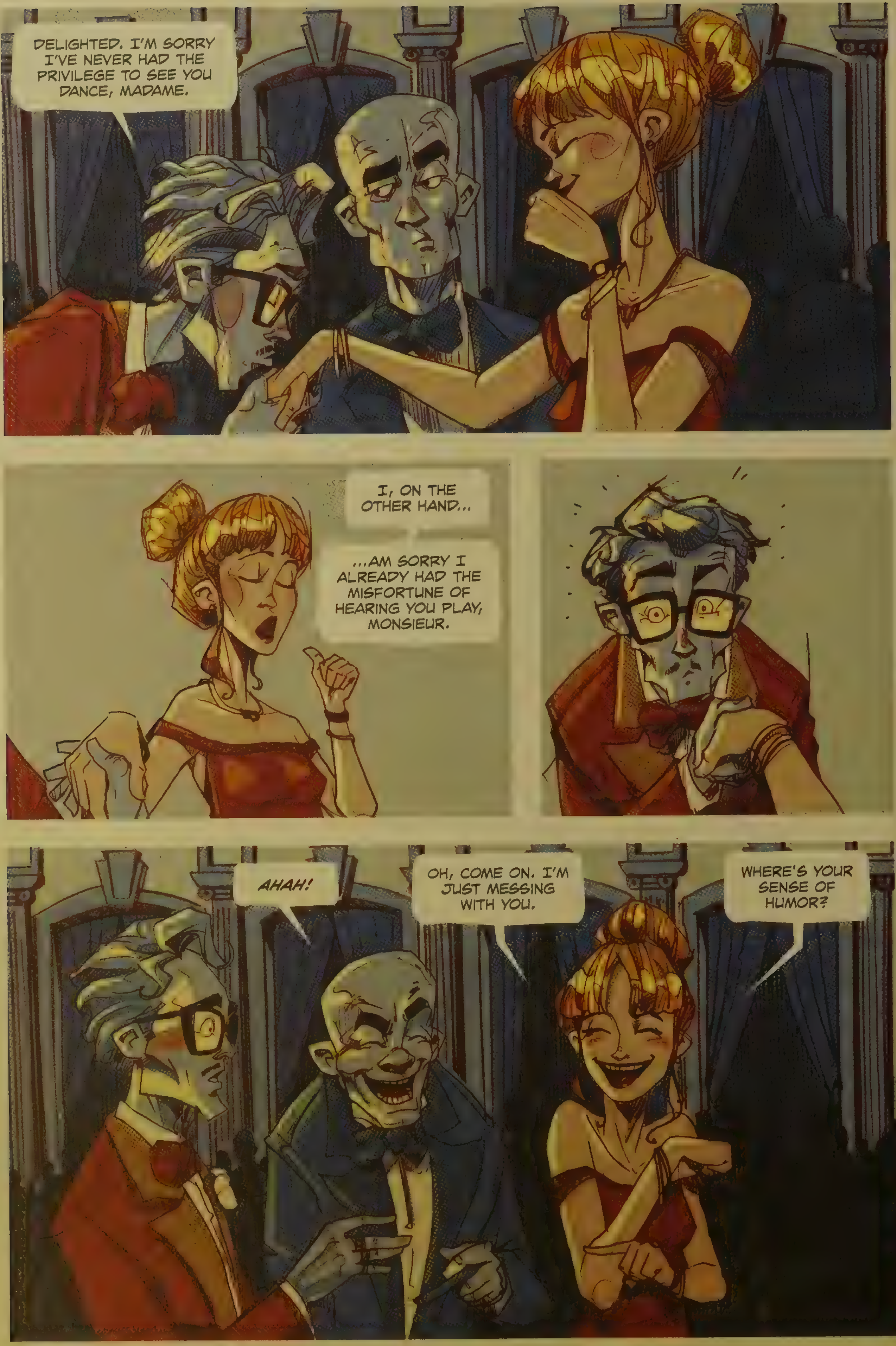

ERIC, WE'RE HERE LIVE FOR THE NATIONAL RADIO. RUMOR HAS IT YOU DONATED A FORTUNE TO BE AT THIS EVENT.
DO YOU WANT TO TELL US HOW MUCH?
WELL... THE AMOUNT DOESN'T MATTER. WHAT MATTERS IS THE CAUSE THAT BROUGHT US HERE TODAY.
BUT... SOME SAY YOU PLAYED FOR THE GERMANS DURING THE OCCUPATION. IS THAT TRUE?
WHAT? WHAT DID YOU SAY?!
WE'RE RUNNING LATE, GET OUT OF THE WAY!

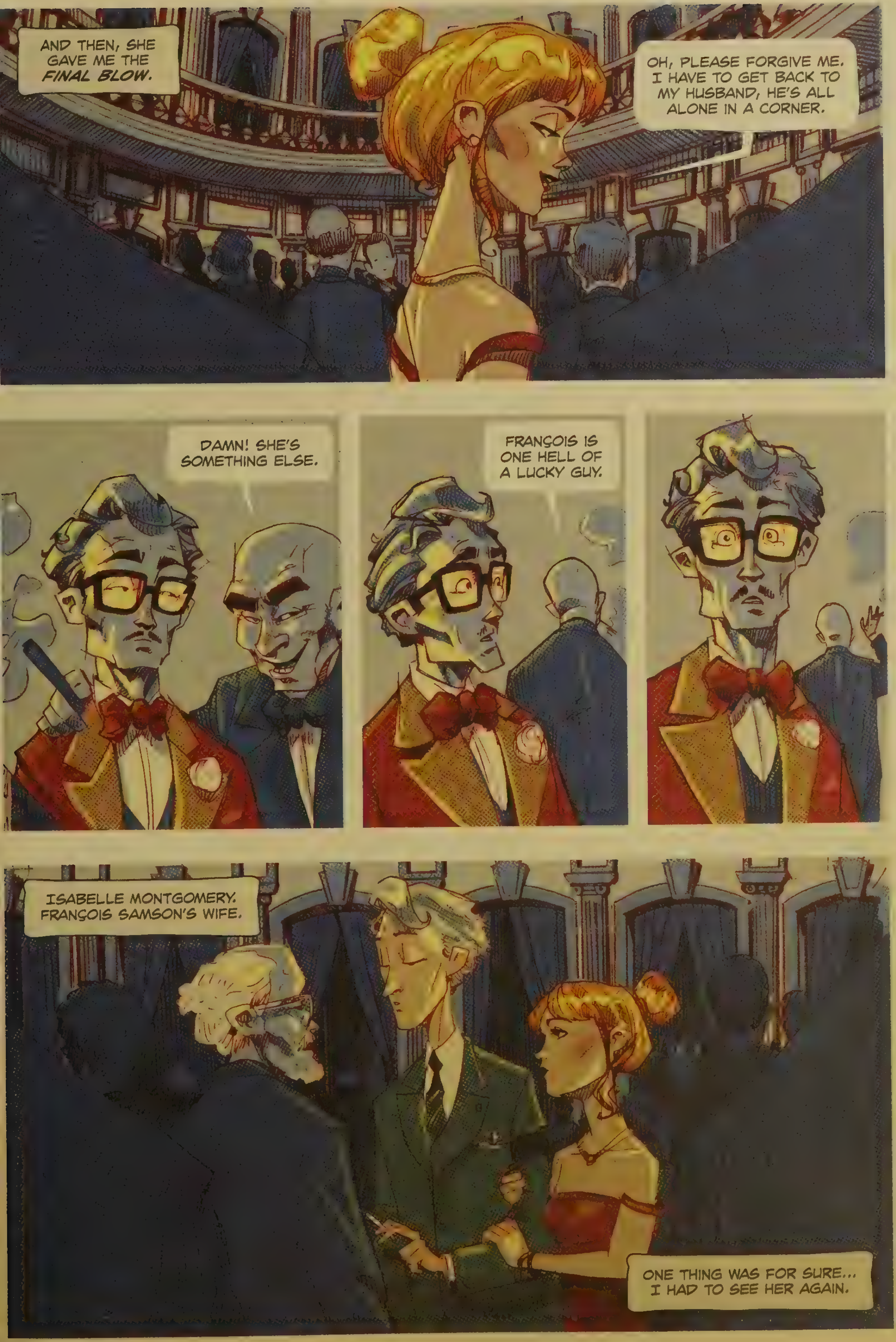

IGNORE THEM, ERIC.
IT'S ONLY NATURAL THAT YOUR SUCCESS SHOULD CAUSE SOME ENVY.
IN TIME, YOU'LL REALIZE THAT IF YOU TRULY WANT A CAREER, MUSIC IS NOT THAT IMPORTANT.
THAT MAN OVER THERE IS ERNST CHOQUET FROM THE DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON LABEL.
WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?
GO MINGLE.

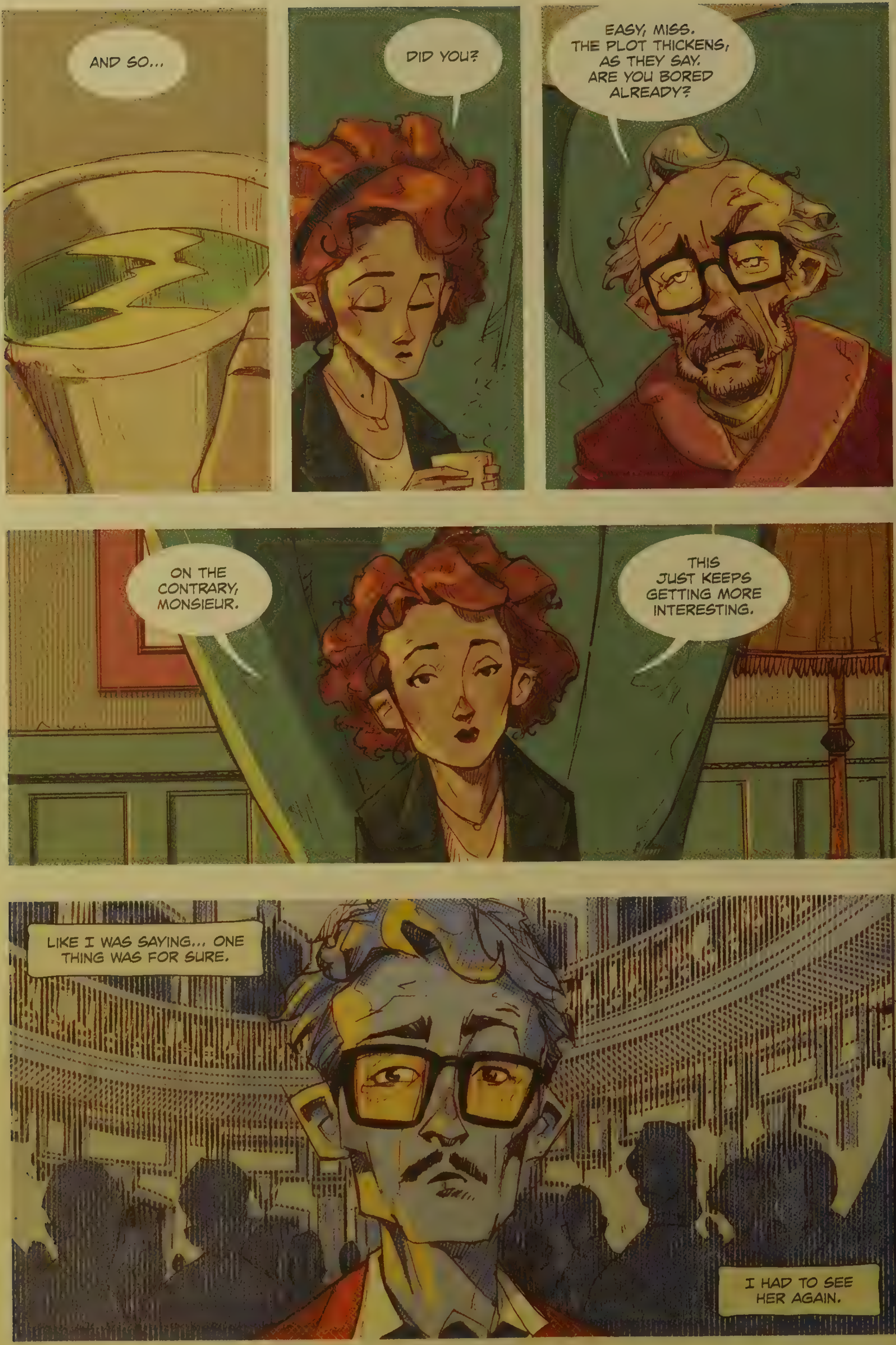

...AND OUT OF NOWHERE, HE STANDS UP AND SAYS, RIGHT IN THEIR FACES:
"YOU CAN OCCUPY OUR LAND, BUT YOU CAN NEVER OCCUPY OUR MINDS!"
..."SOULS".
...WHAT?
"YOU CAN NEVER OCCUPY OUR *SOULS*." THAT'S WHAT HE SAID.
AH, YES! THAT'S IT! AND WHEN THEY HEAR THIS, ONE OF THEM GETS UP AND...

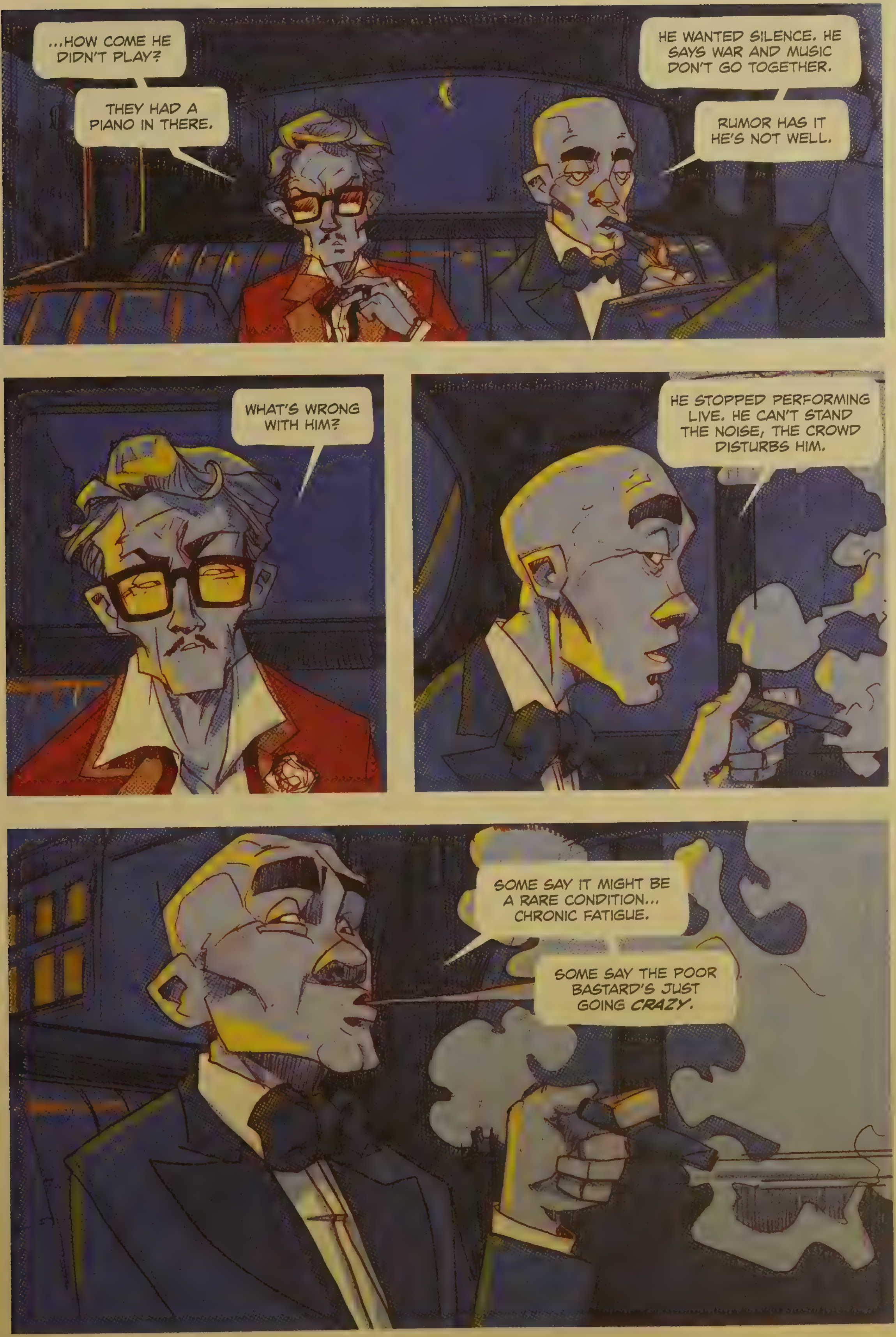

AS THE HOURS PASSED, THE MORE BORED I GOT.
...IN THE CONTEXT OF TONAL HARMONISATION AND ORCHESTRAL COUNTERPOINT, IT DOES COLOR AND AMPLIFY THE AESTHETIC IMPACT...
ALL THOSE STUCK-UP LITTLE IDIOTS SWIMMING IN THEIR SEA OF FUTILITY.
...NONETHELESS, THE USAGE OF THE TONAL SYSTEM DOES NOT MAKE ANY SENSE IN THE REALM OF MODERN MUSIC...
WHEN SUDDENLY, I SAW HER IN THE CROWD.
...AN INTERPRETATION SHOULD REFLECT ITS ZEITGEIST AS WELL AS A WRITTEN COMPOSITION...

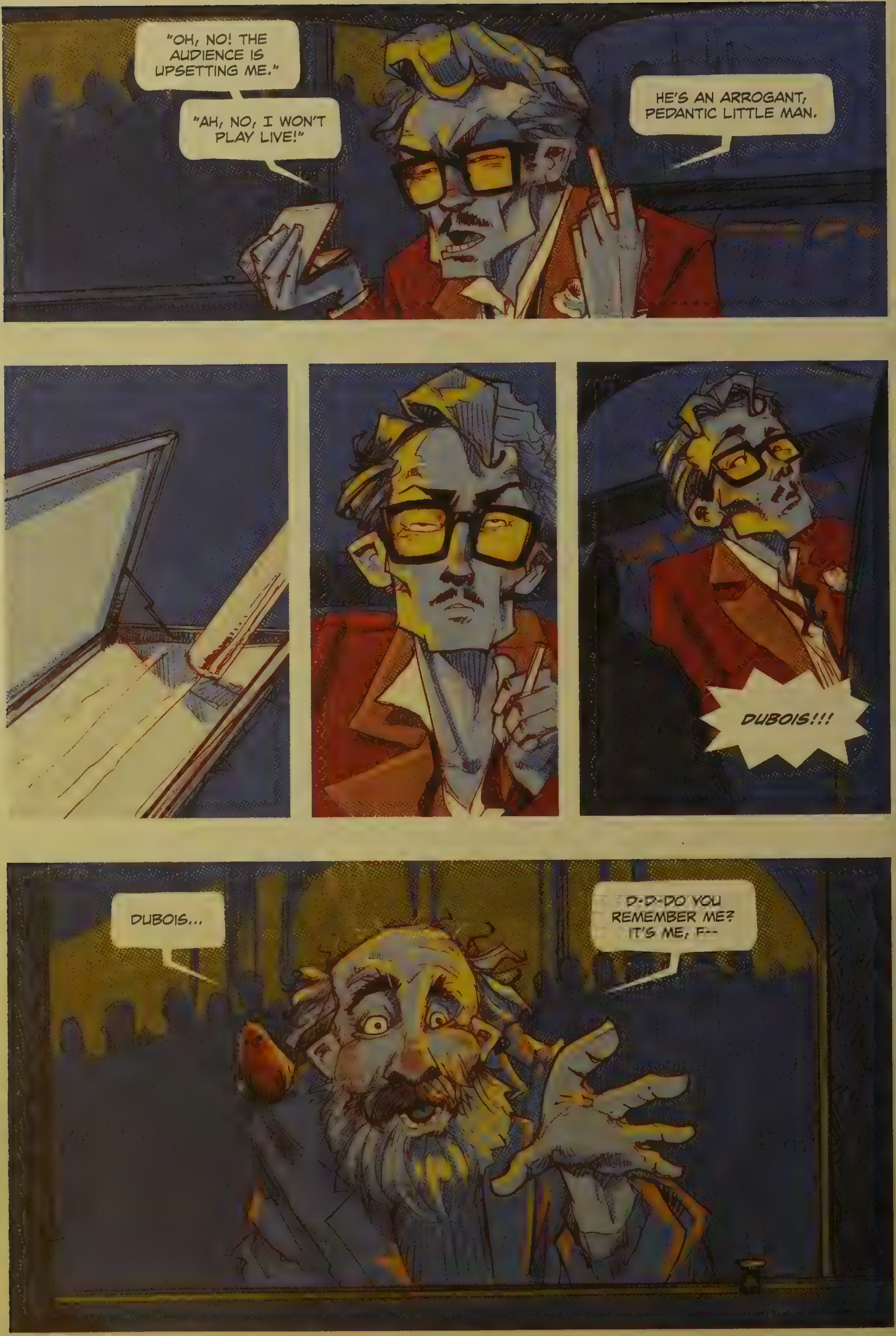

MADAME MONTGOMERY, PLEASURE TO SEE YOU AGAIN.
YOU LOOK MORE STUNNING EACH DAY.
OH, THANK YOU, MONSIEUR CHOQUET.
MAY I INTRODUCE YOU TO ISABELLE MONTGOMERY, ONE OF OUR FINEST DANCERS.
SHE WORKED WITH JACQUES DEMY IN "THE YOUNG GIRLS OF ROCHEFORT"! MADAME, ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE YOU TO ERIC--
ERIC BONJOUR. I KNOW YOU FROM THE TELEVISION.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATION. IT WAS RATHER... GENEROUS.

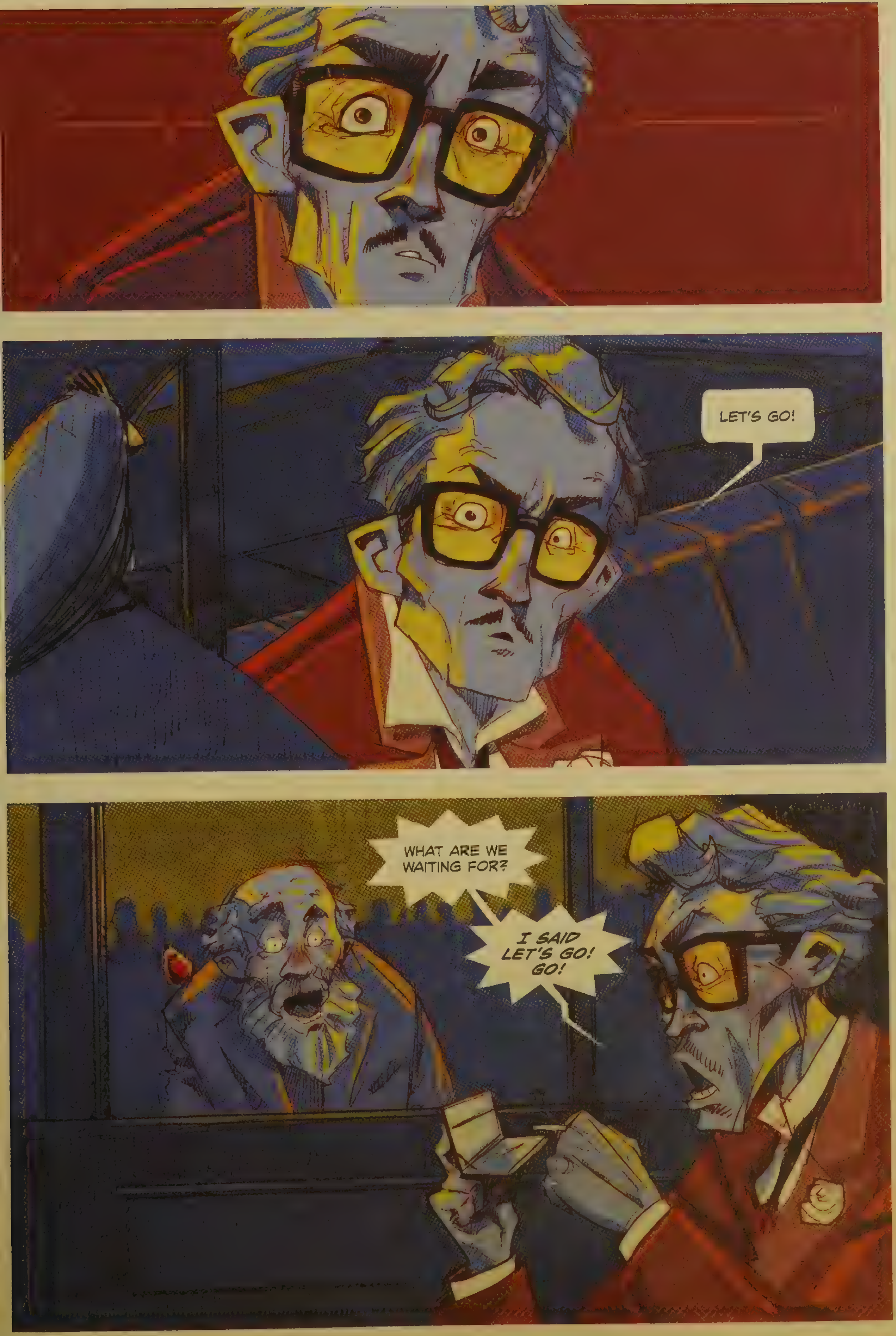

DELIGHTED. I'M SORRY I'VE NEVER HAD THE PRIVILEGE TO SEE YOU DANCE, MADAME.
I, ON THE OTHER HAND...
...AM SORRY I ALREADY HAD THE MISFORTUNE OF HEARING YOU PLAY, MONSIEUR.
AHAH!
OH, COME ON. I'M JUST MESSING WITH YOU.
WHERE'S YOUR SENSE OF HUMOR?

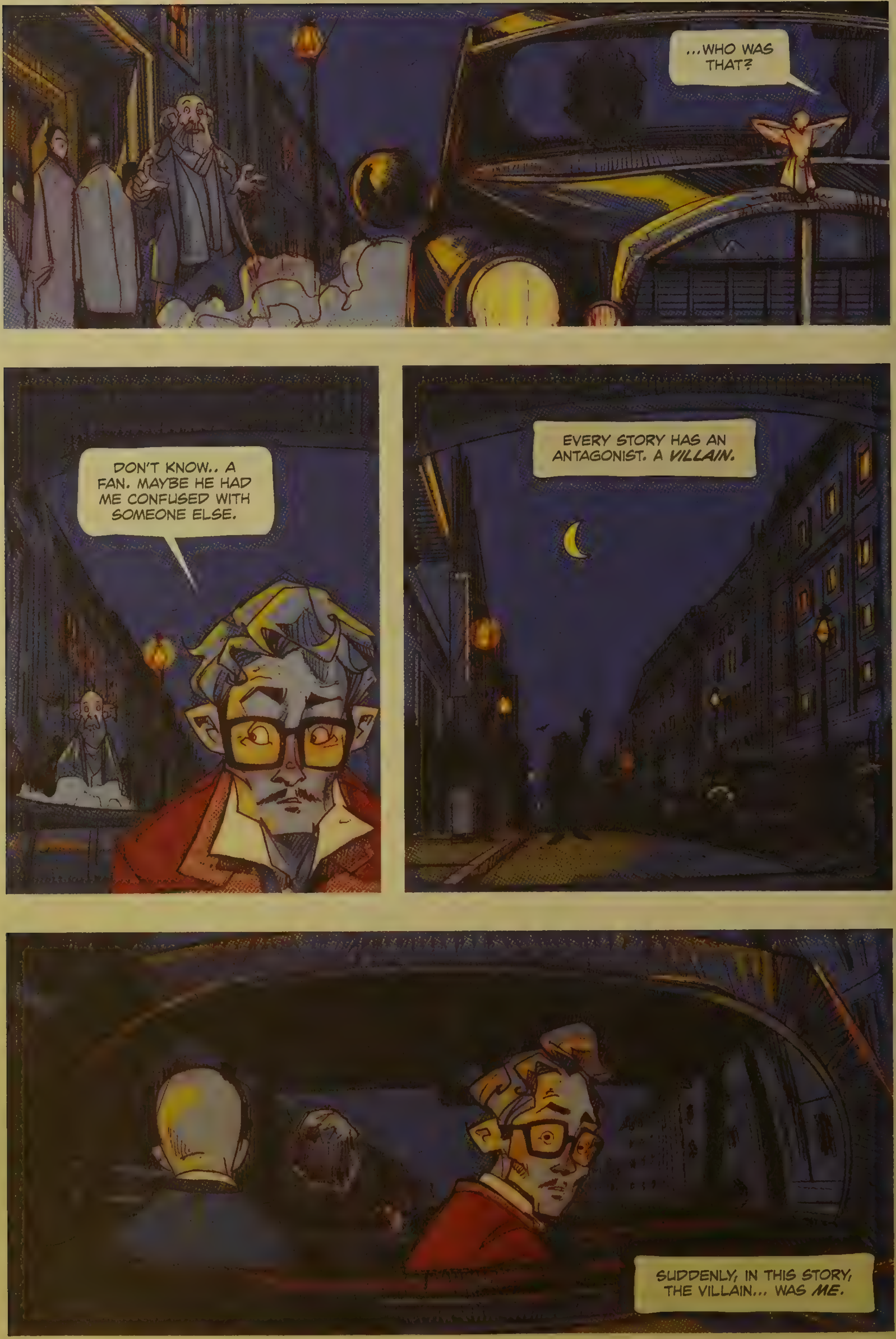

AND THEN, SHE GAVE ME THE ***FINAL BLOW.***
OH, PLEASE FORGIVE ME. I HAVE TO GET BACK TO MY HUSBAND, HE'S ALL ALONE IN A CORNER.
DAMN! SHE'S SOMETHING ELSE.
FRANÇOIS IS ONE HELL OF A LUCKY GUY.
ISABELLE MONTGOMERY. FRANÇOIS SAMSON'S WIFE.
ONE THING WAS FOR SURE... I HAD TO SEE HER AGAIN.

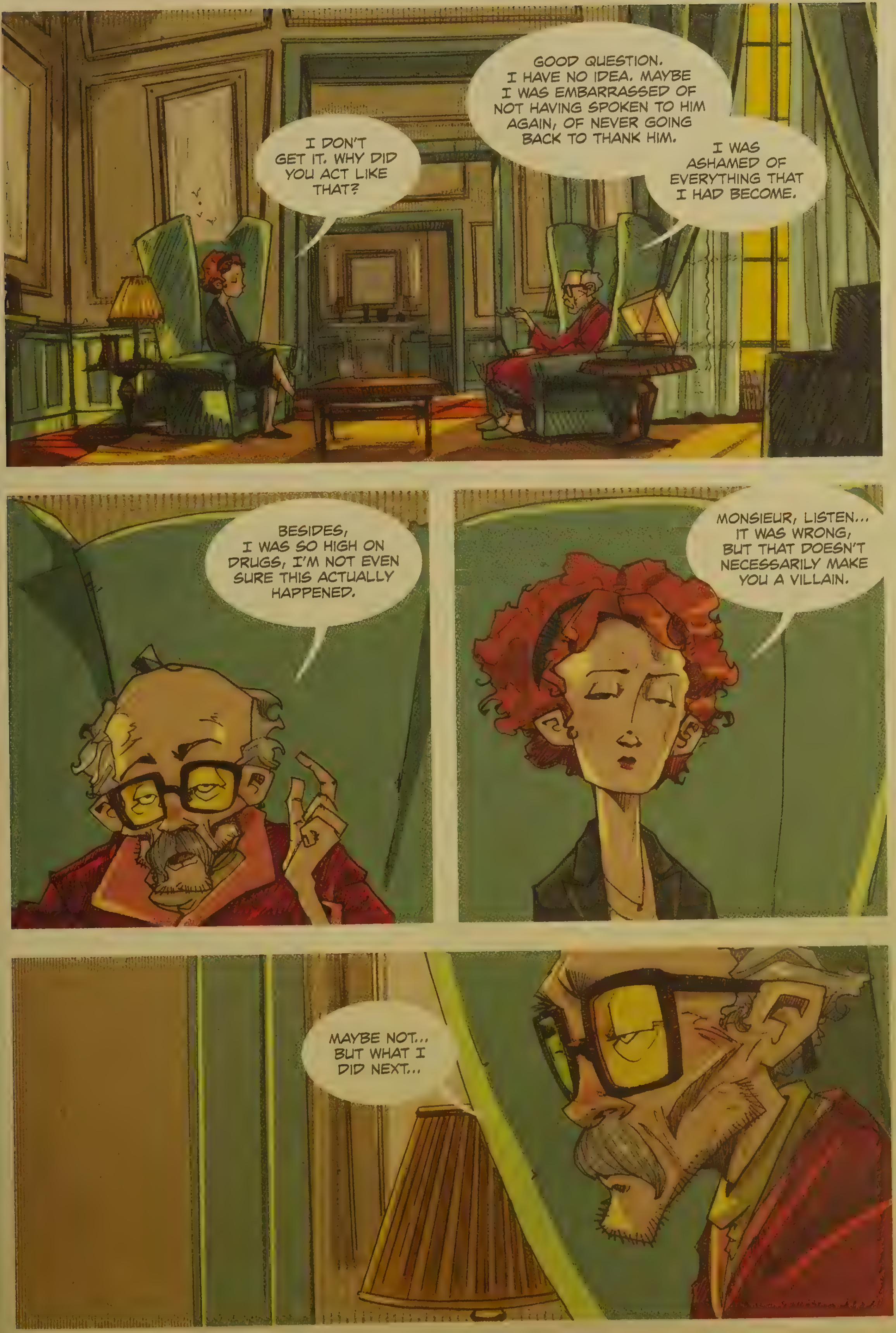

AND SO...
DID YOU?
EASY, MISS. THE PLOT THICKENS, AS THEY SAY. ARE YOU BORED ALREADY?
ON THE CONTRARY, MONSIEUR.
THIS JUST KEEPS GETTING MORE INTERESTING.
LIKE I WAS SAYING... ONE THING WAS FOR SURE.
I HAD TO SEE HER AGAIN.

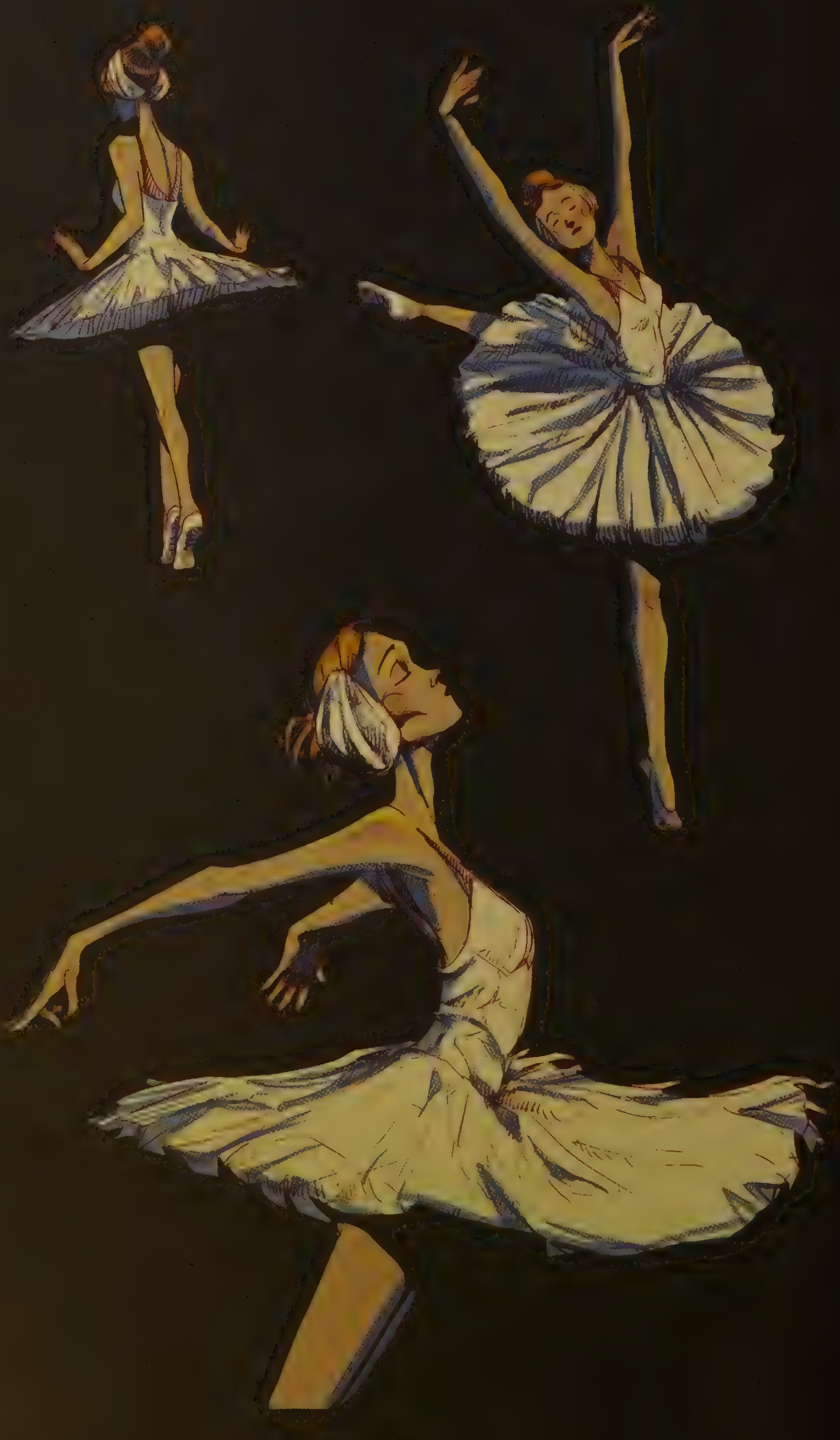

...HOW COME HE DIDN'T PLAY?
THEY HAD A PIANO IN THERE.
HE WANTED SILENCE. HE SAYS WAR AND MUSIC DON'T GO TOGETHER.
RUMOR HAS IT HE'S NOT WELL.
WHAT'S WRONG WITH HIM?
HE STOPPED PERFORMING LIVE. HE CAN'T STAND THE NOISE, THE CROWD DISTURBS HIM.
SOME SAY IT MIGHT BE A RARE CONDITION... CHRONIC FATIGUE.
SOME SAY THE POOR BASTARD'S JUST GOING *CRAZY*.

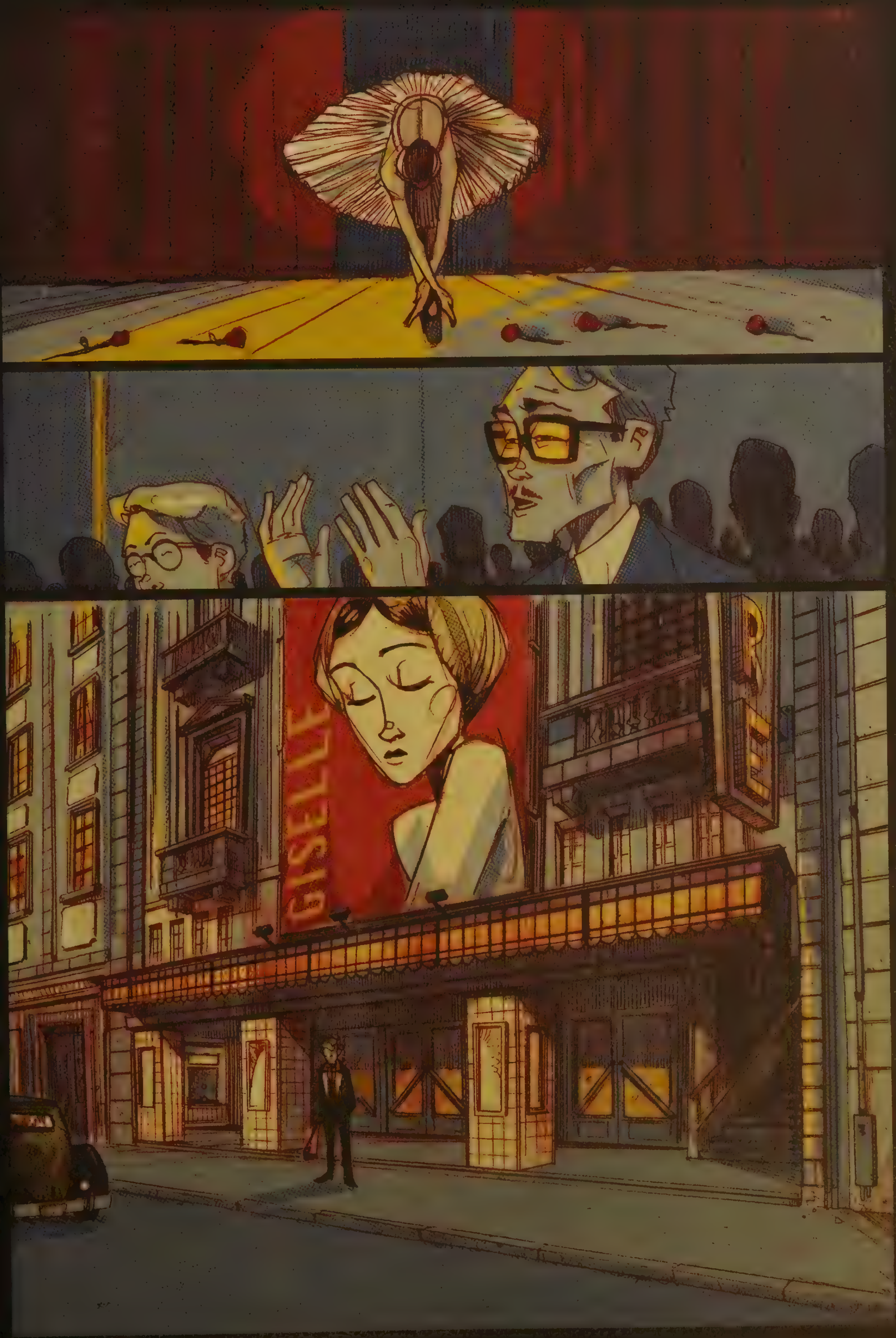

"OH, NO! THE AUDIENCE IS UPSETTING ME."
"AH, NO, I WON'T PLAY LIVE!"
HE'S AN ARROGANT, PEDANTIC LITTLE MAN.
DUBOIS!!!
DUBOIS...
D-D-DO YOU REMEMBER ME? IT'S ME, F--

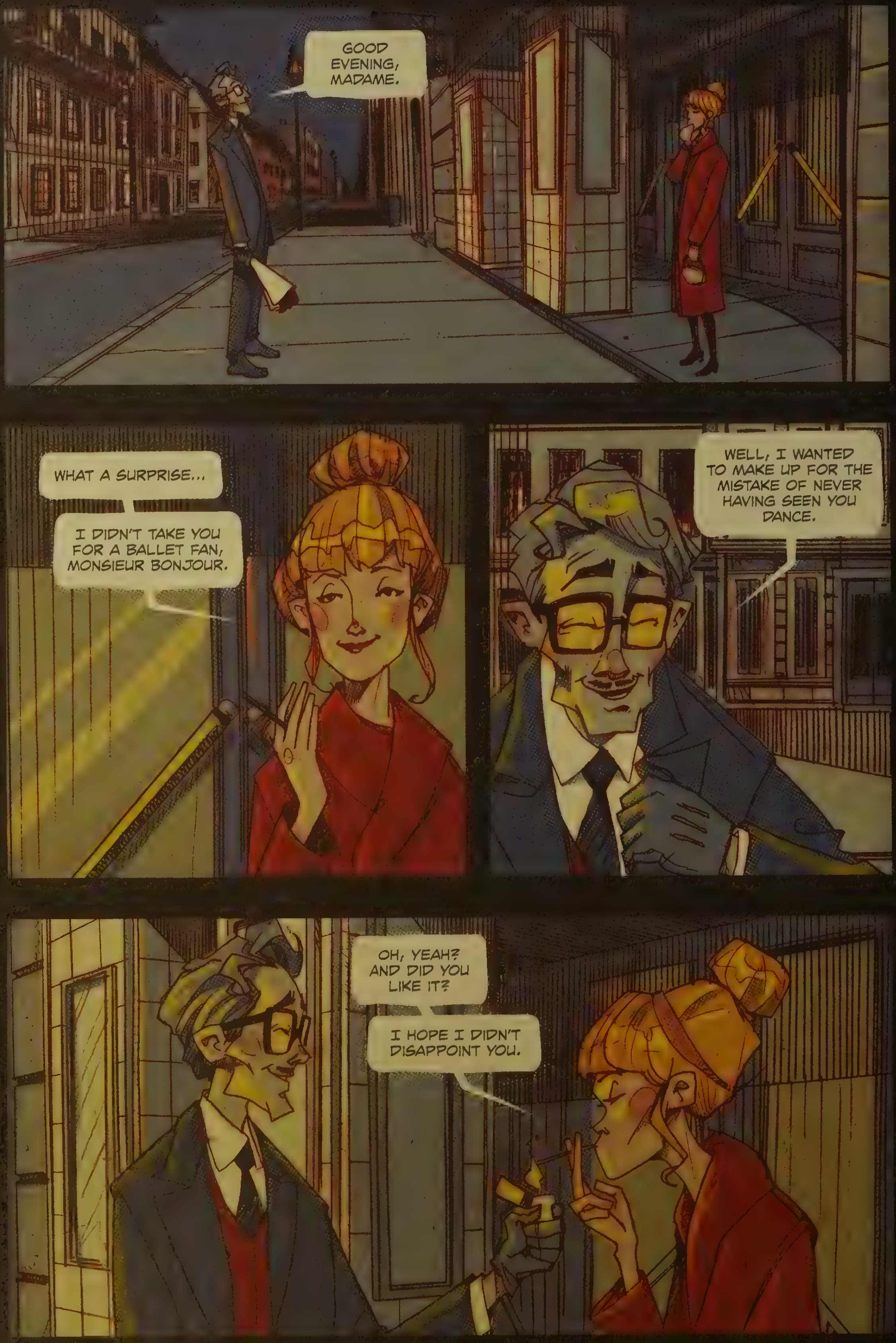

LET'S GO!
WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR?
I SAID LET'S GO! GO!

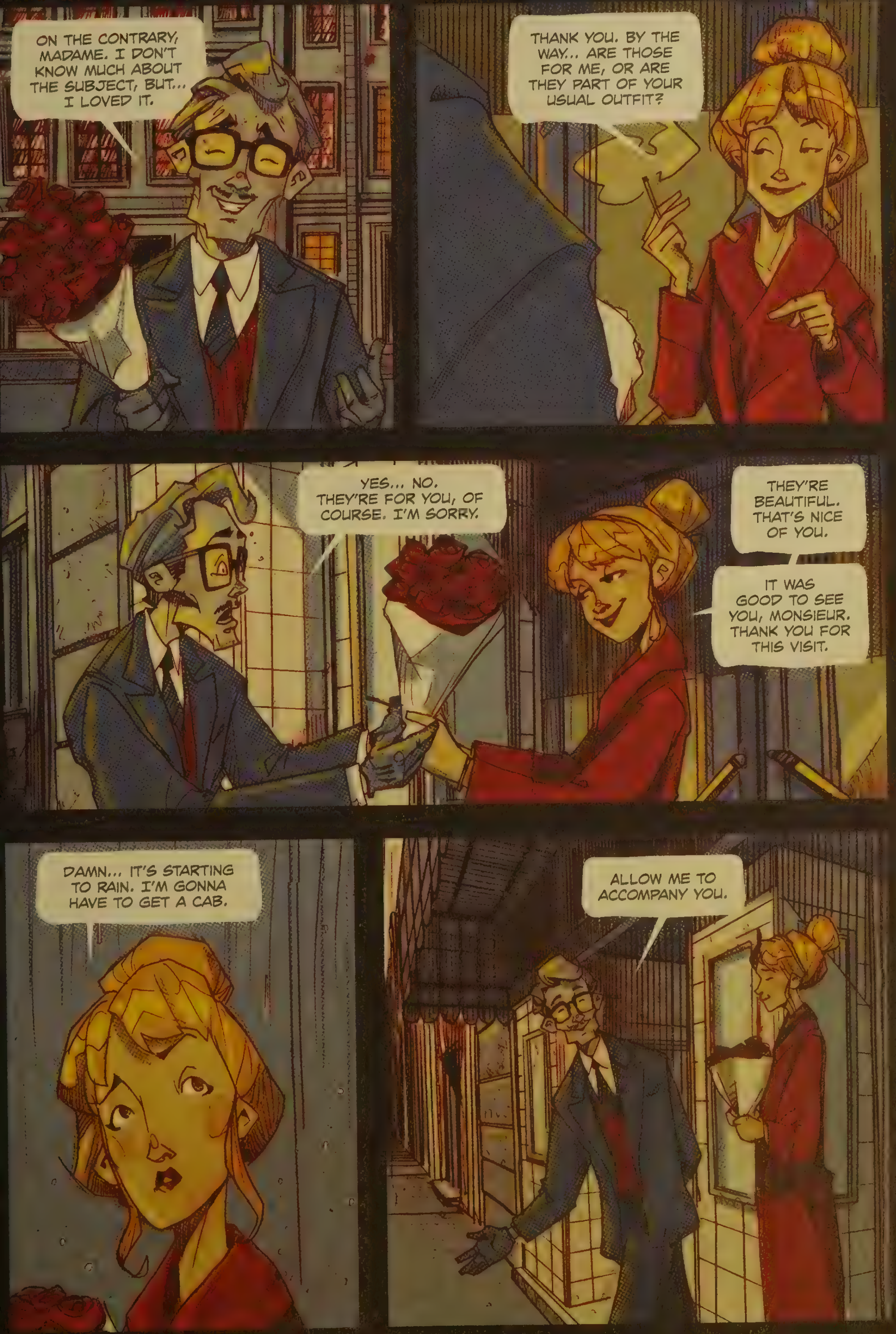

...WHO WAS THAT?
DON'T KNOW.. A FAN. MAYBE HE HAD ME CONFUSED WITH SOMEONE ELSE.
EVERY STORY HAS AN ANTAGONIST. A *VILLAIN.*
SUDDENLY, IN THIS STORY, THE VILLAIN... WAS *ME.*

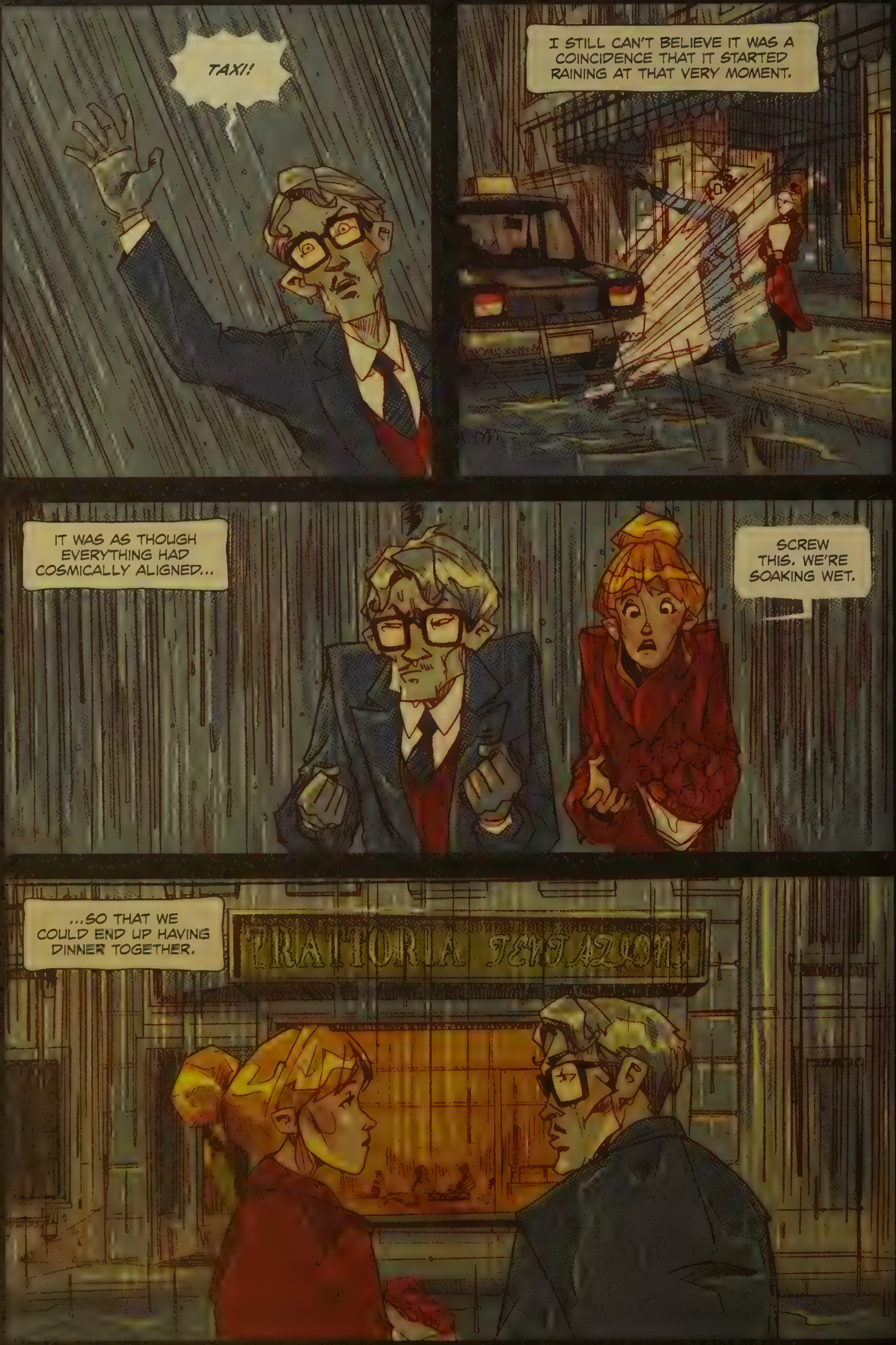

I DON'T GET IT. WHY DID YOU ACT LIKE THAT?
GOOD QUESTION. I HAVE NO IDEA. MAYBE I WAS EMBARRASSED OF NOT HAVING SPOKEN TO HIM AGAIN, OF NEVER GOING BACK TO THANK HIM.
I WAS ASHAMED OF EVERYTHING THAT I HAD BECOME.
BESIDES, I WAS SO HIGH ON DRUGS, I'M NOT EVEN SURE THIS ACTUALLY HAPPENED.
MONSIEUR, LISTEN... IT WAS WRONG, BUT THAT DOESN'T NECESSARILY MAKE YOU A VILLAIN.
MAYBE NOT... BUT WHAT I DID NEXT...

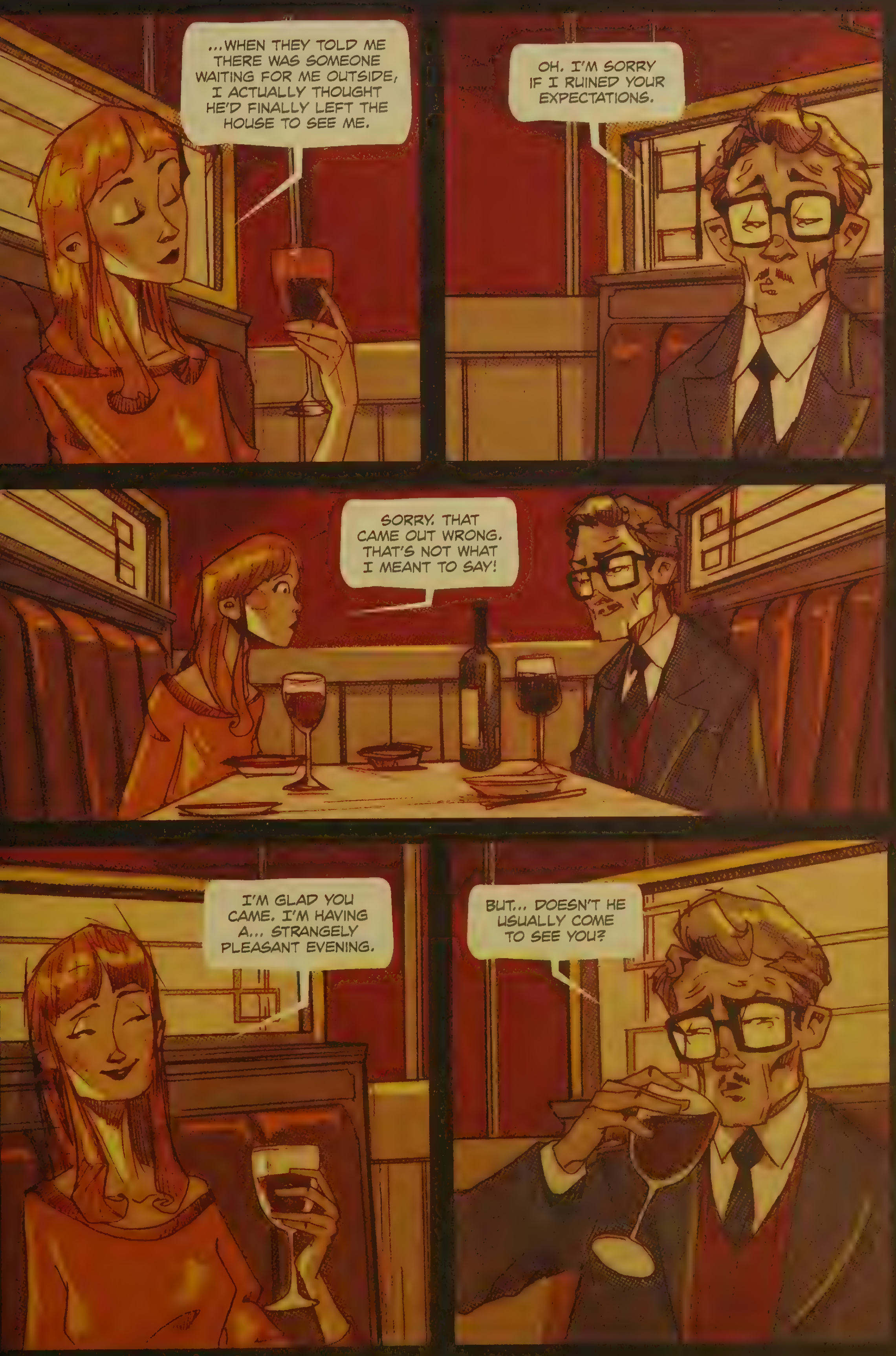


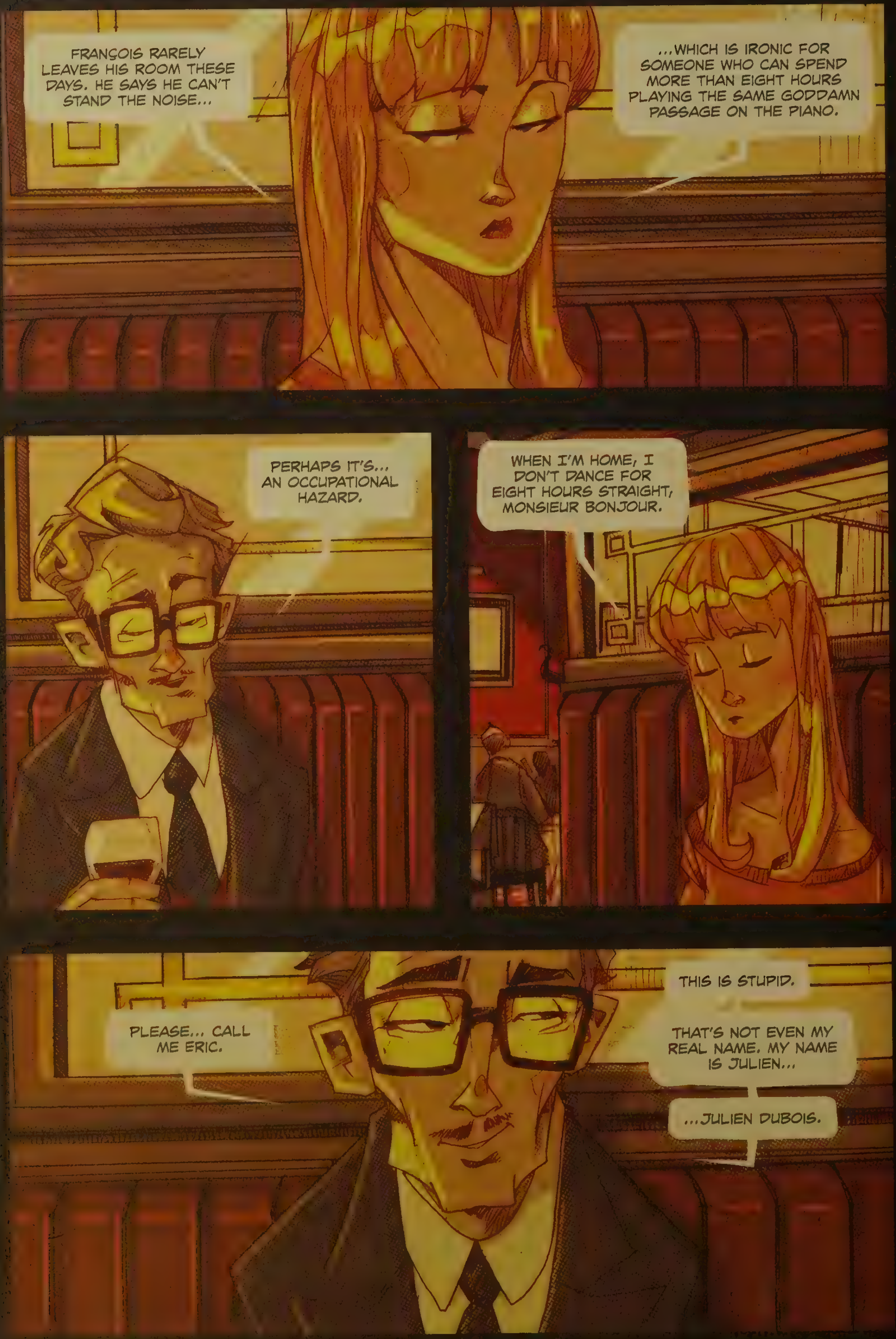

GISELLE

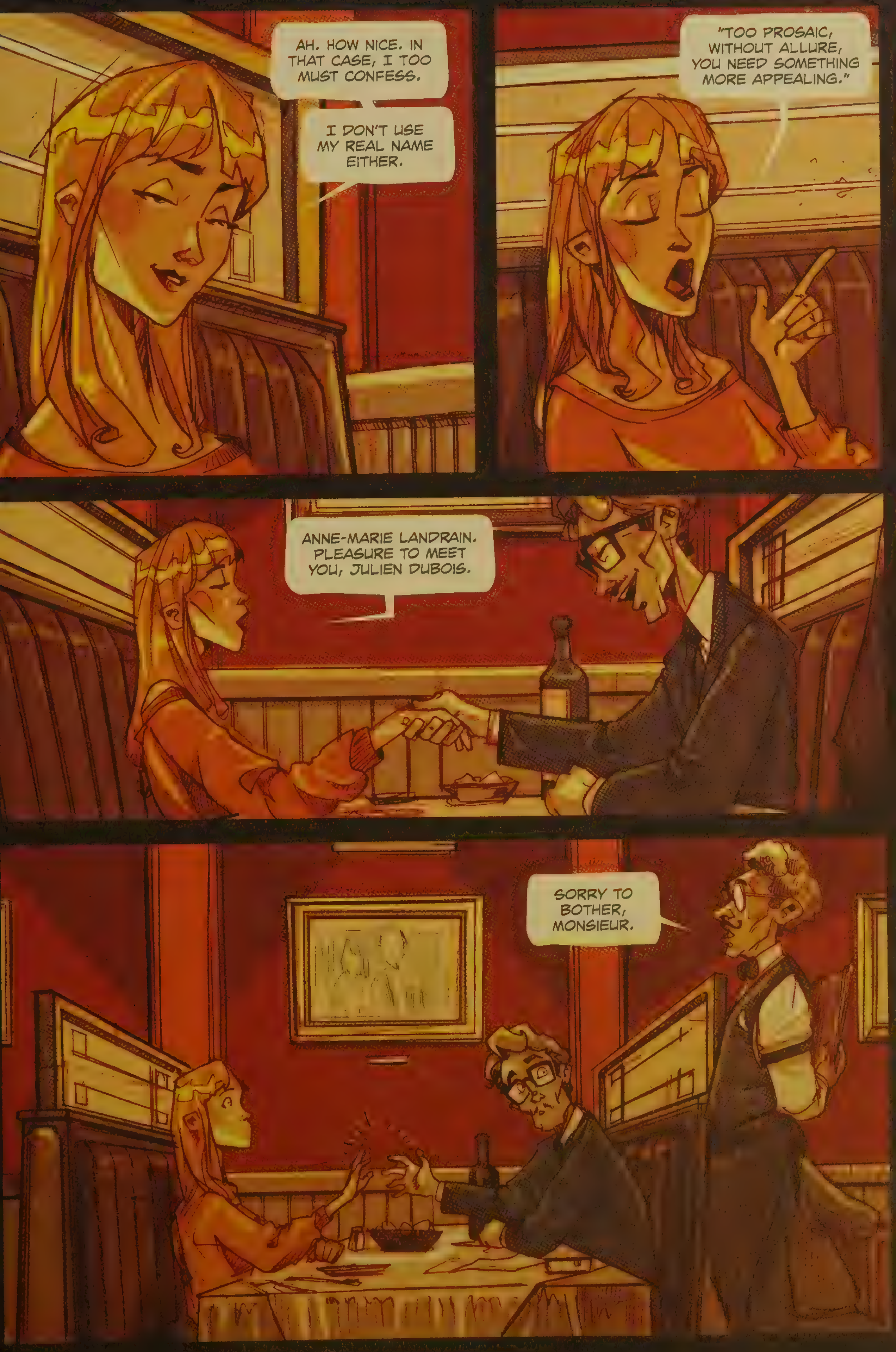

GOOD EVENING, MADAME.
WHAT A SURPRISE...
I DIDN'T TAKE YOU FOR A BALLET FAN, MONSIEUR BONJOUR.
WELL, I WANTED TO MAKE UP FOR THE MISTAKE OF NEVER HAVING SEEN YOU DANCE.
OH, YEAH? AND DID YOU LIKE IT?
I HOPE I DIDN'T DISAPPOINT YOU.

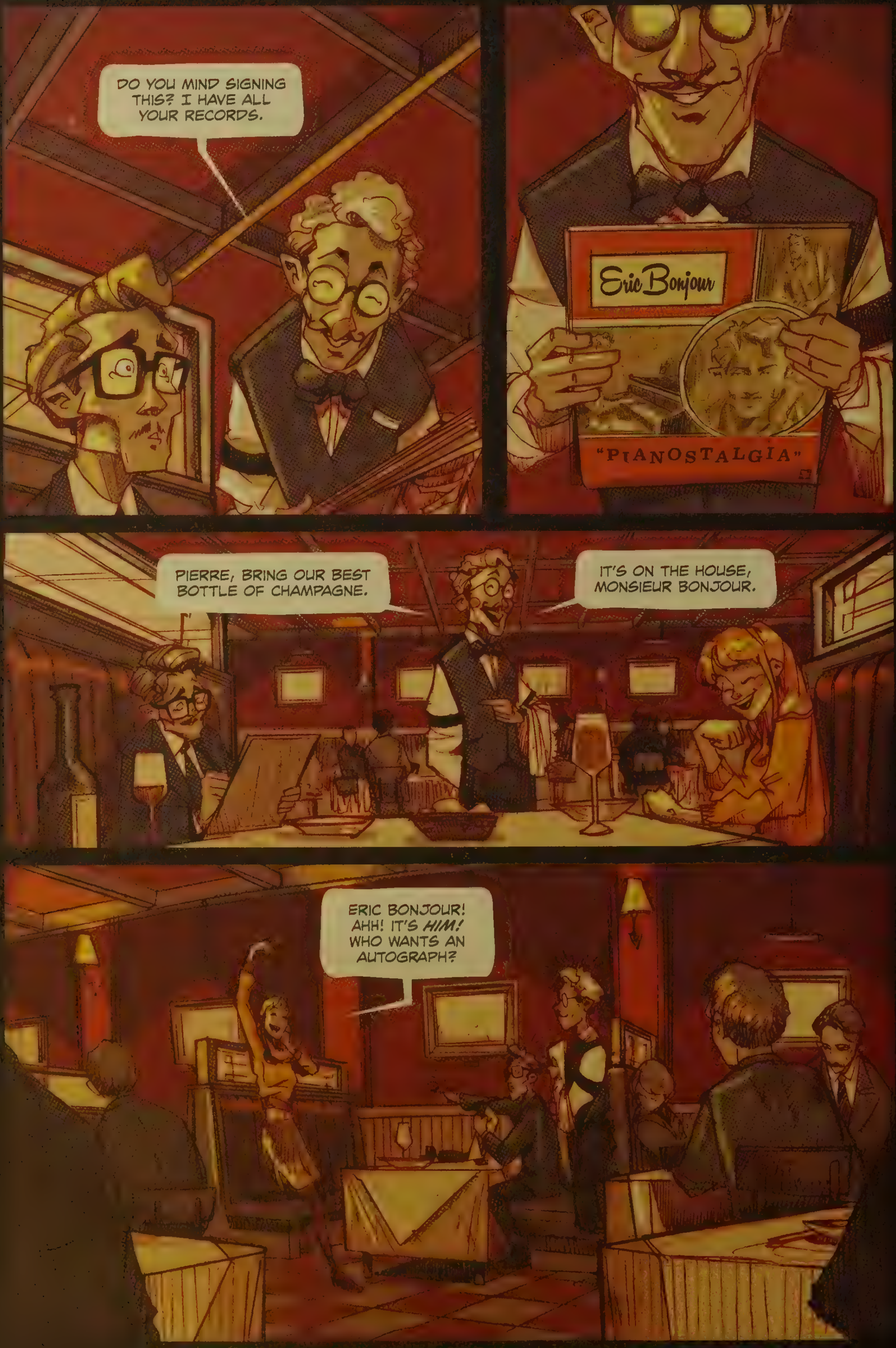

ON THE CONTRARY, MADAME. I DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT THE SUBJECT, BUT... I LOVED IT.
THANK YOU. BY THE WAY... ARE THOSE FOR ME, OR ARE THEY PART OF YOUR USUAL OUTFIT?
YES... NO. THEY'RE FOR YOU, OF COURSE. I'M SORRY.
THEY'RE BEAUTIFUL. THAT'S NICE OF YOU.
IT WAS GOOD TO SEE YOU, MONSIEUR. THANK YOU FOR THIS VISIT.
DAMN... IT'S STARTING TO RAIN. I'M GONNA HAVE TO GET A CAB.
ALLOW ME TO ACCOMPANY YOU.

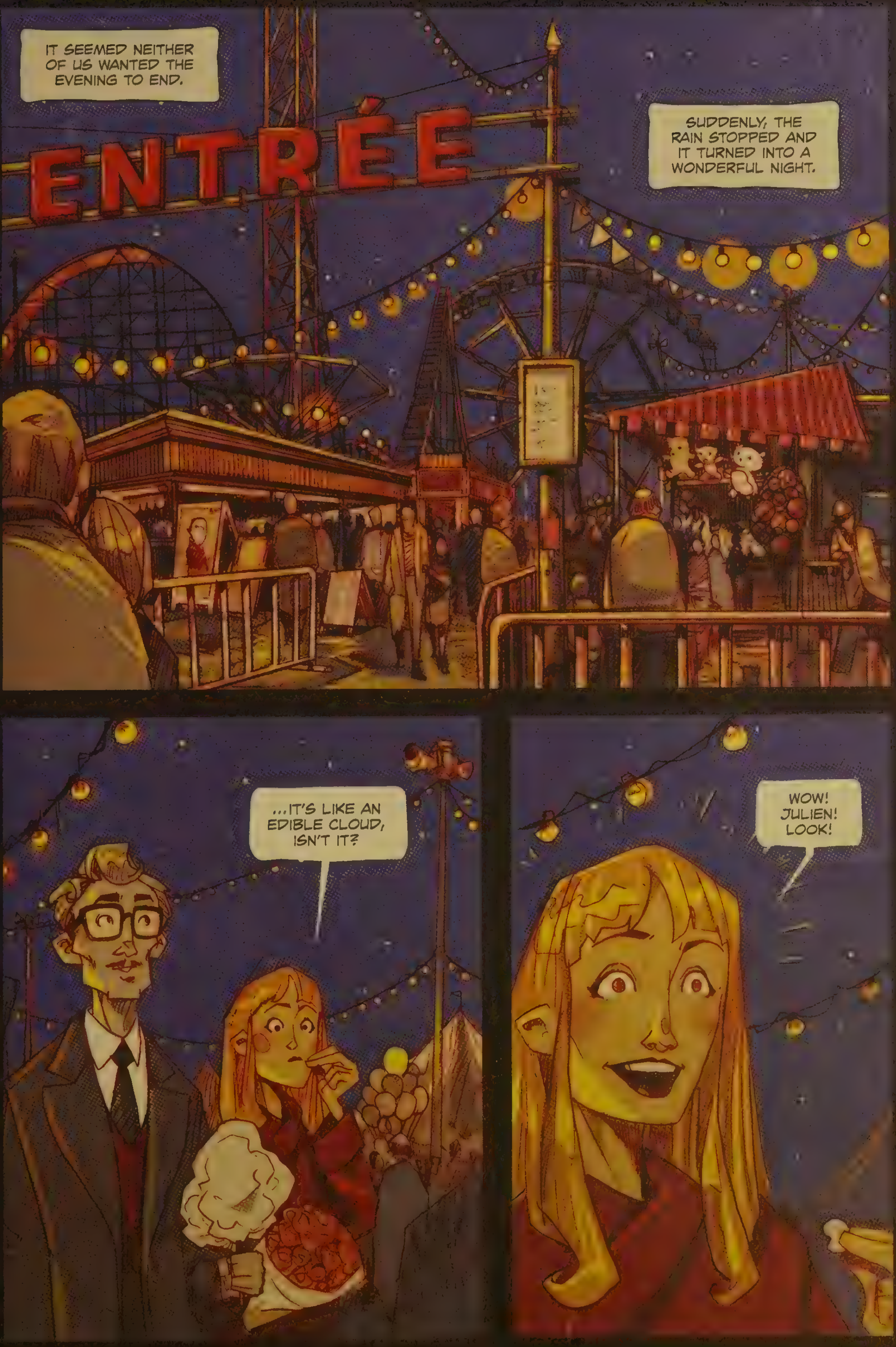

TAXI!
I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE IT WAS A COINCIDENCE THAT IT STARTED RAINING AT THAT VERY MOMENT.
IT WAS AS THOUGH EVERYTHING HAD COSMICALLY ALIGNED...
SCREW THIS. WE'RE SOAKING WET.
...SO THAT WE COULD END UP HAVING DINNER TOGETHER.
TRATTORIA TENTAZIONI

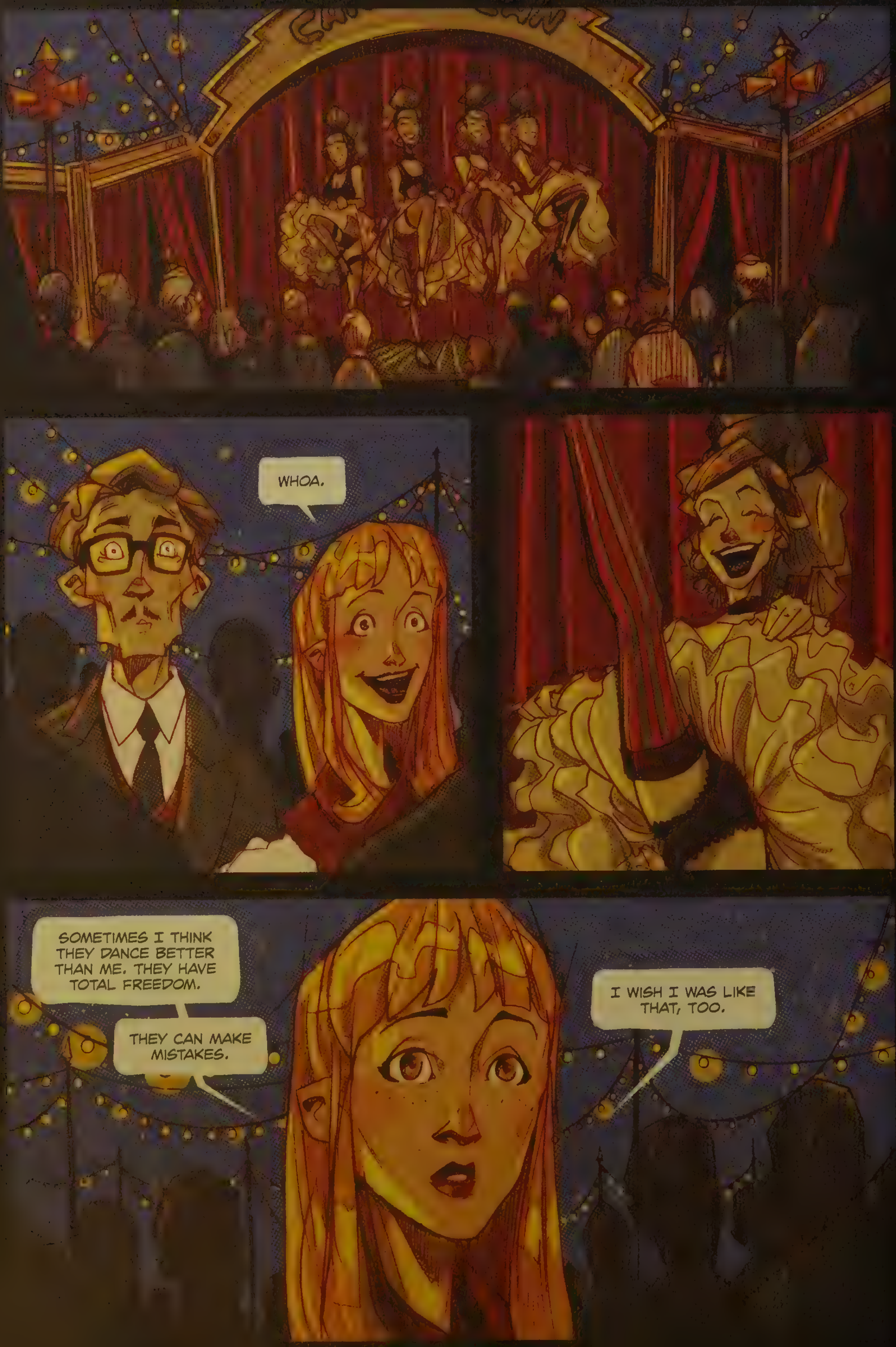

...WHEN THEY TOLD ME THERE WAS SOMEONE WAITING FOR ME OUTSIDE, I ACTUALLY THOUGHT HE'D FINALLY LEFT THE HOUSE TO SEE ME.
OH. I'M SORRY IF I RUINED YOUR EXPECTATIONS.
SORRY. THAT CAME OUT WRONG. THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT TO SAY!
I'M GLAD YOU CAME. I'M HAVING A... STRANGELY PLEASANT EVENING.
BUT... DOESN'T HE USUALLY COME TO SEE YOU?

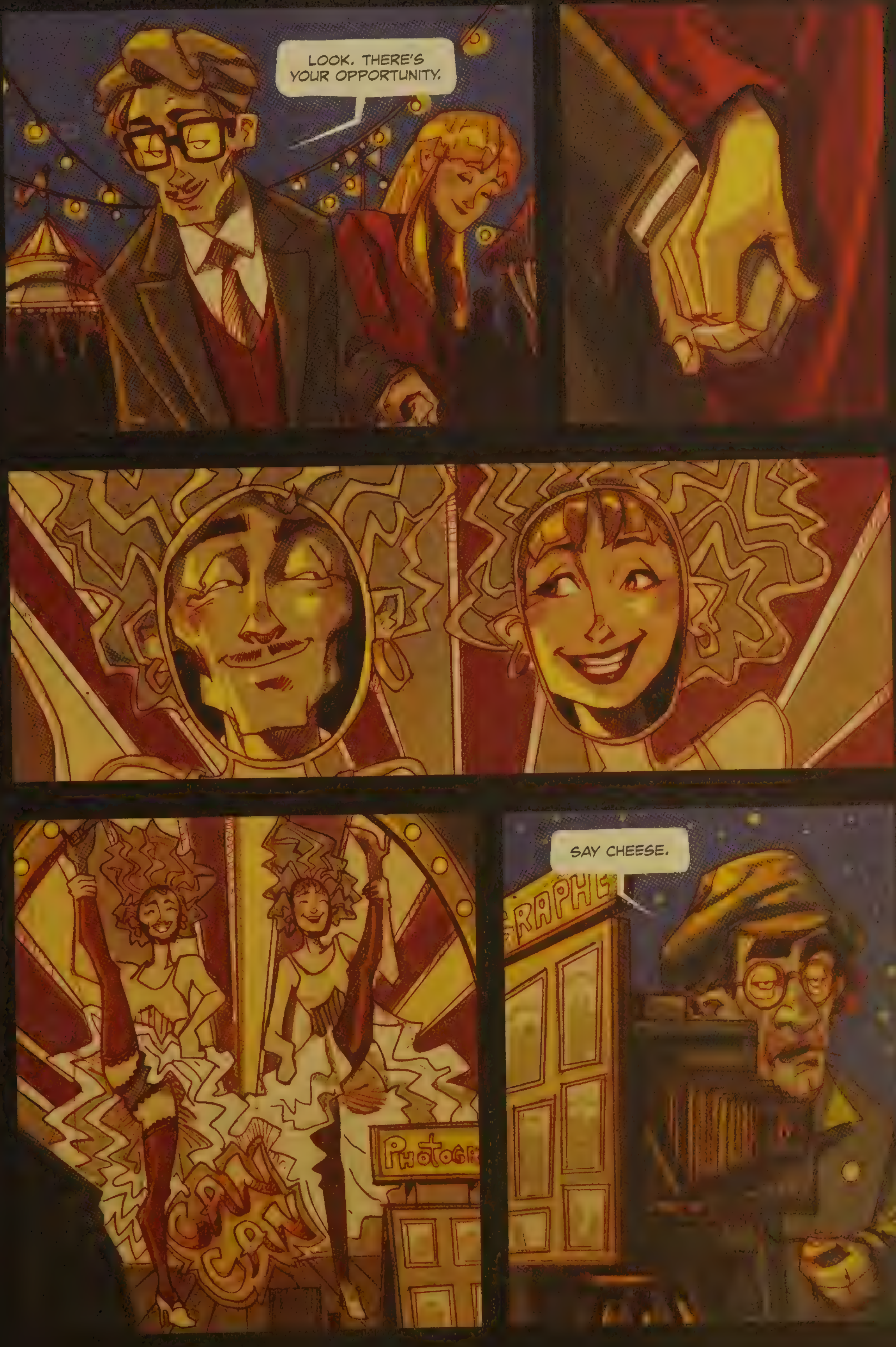

FRANÇOIS RARELY LEAVES HIS ROOM THESE DAYS. HE SAYS HE CAN'T STAND THE NOISE...
...WHICH IS IRONIC FOR SOMEONE WHO CAN SPEND MORE THAN EIGHT HOURS PLAYING THE SAME GODDAMN PASSAGE ON THE PIANO.
PERHAPS IT'S... AN OCCUPATIONAL HAZARD.
WHEN I'M HOME, I DON'T DANCE FOR EIGHT HOURS STRAIGHT, MONSIEUR BONJOUR.
PLEASE... CALL ME ERIC.
THIS IS STUPID.
THAT'S NOT EVEN MY REAL NAME. MY NAME IS JULIEN...
...JULIEN DUBOIS.

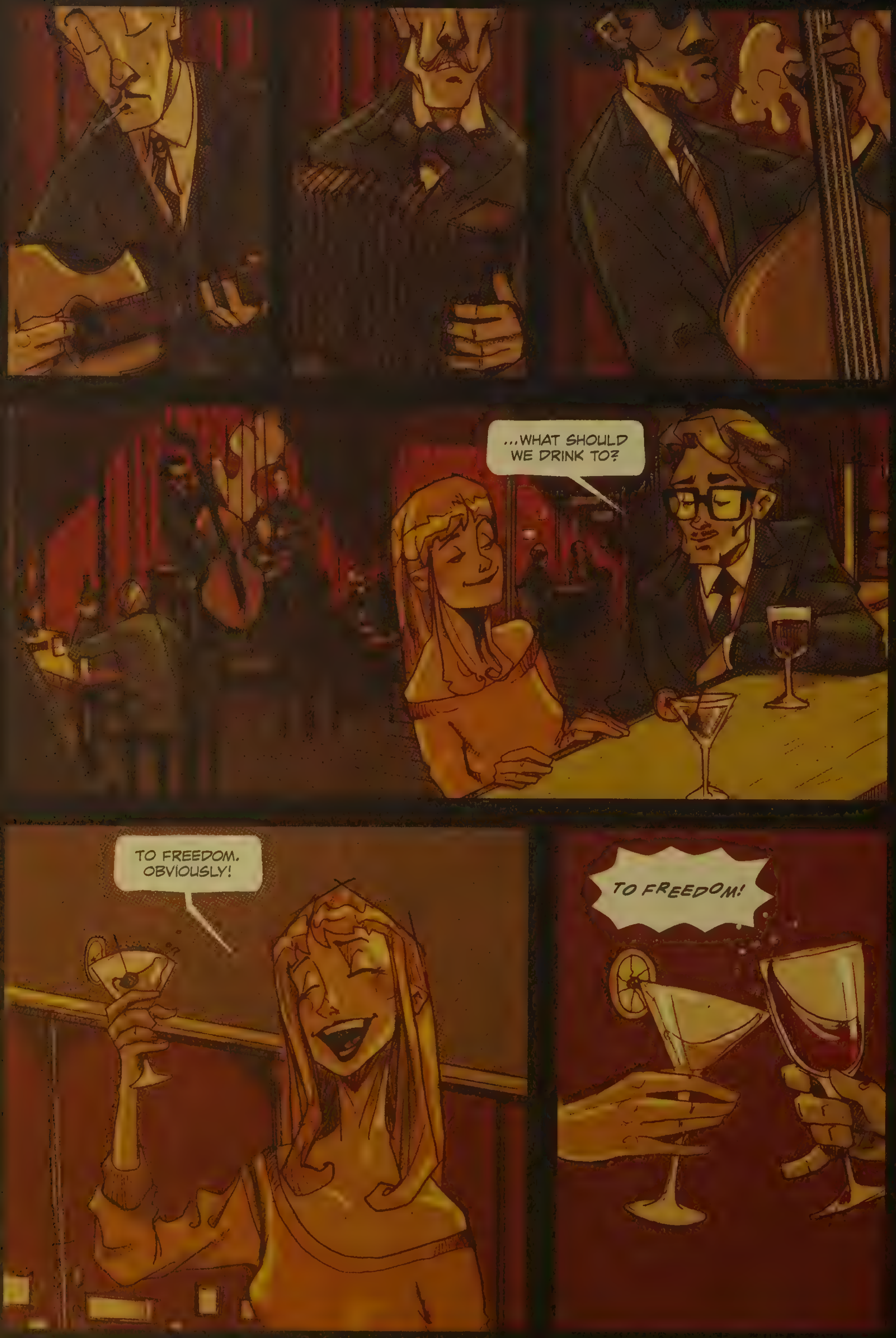

AH. HOW NICE. IN THAT CASE, I TOO MUST CONFESS.
I DON'T USE MY REAL NAME EITHER.
"TOO PROSAIC, WITHOUT ALLURE, YOU NEED SOMETHING MORE APPEALING."
ANNE-MARIE LANDRAIN. PLEASURE TO MEET YOU, JULIEN DUBOIS.
SORRY TO BOTHER, MONSIEUR.

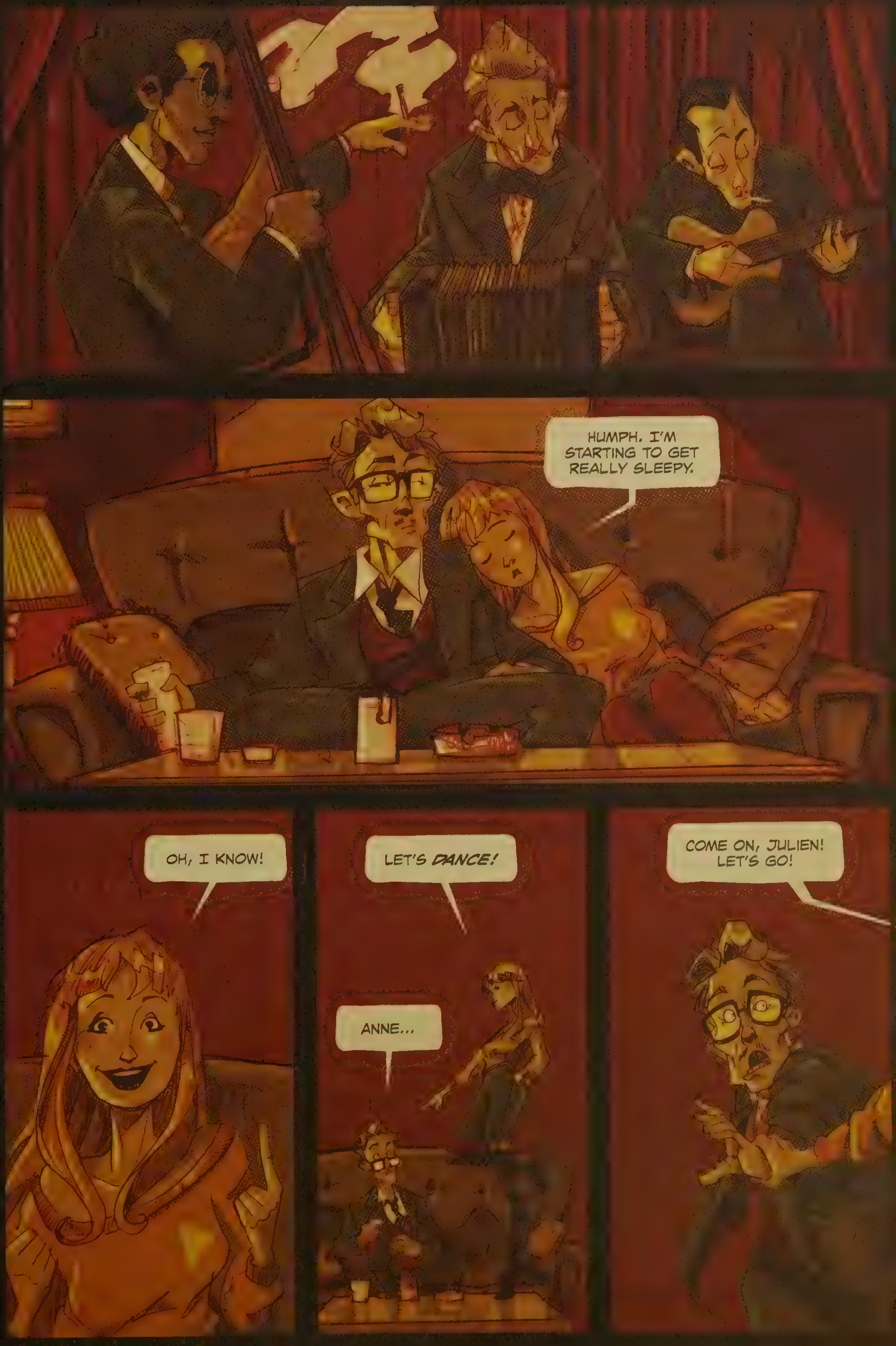

DO YOU MIND SIGNING THIS? I HAVE ALL YOUR RECORDS.
Eric Bonjour
"PIANOSTALGIA"
PIERRE, BRING OUR BEST BOTTLE OF CHAMPAGNE.
IT'S ON THE HOUSE, MONSIEUR BONJOUR.
ERIC BONJOUR! AHH! IT'S *HIM!* WHO WANTS AN AUTOGRAPH?

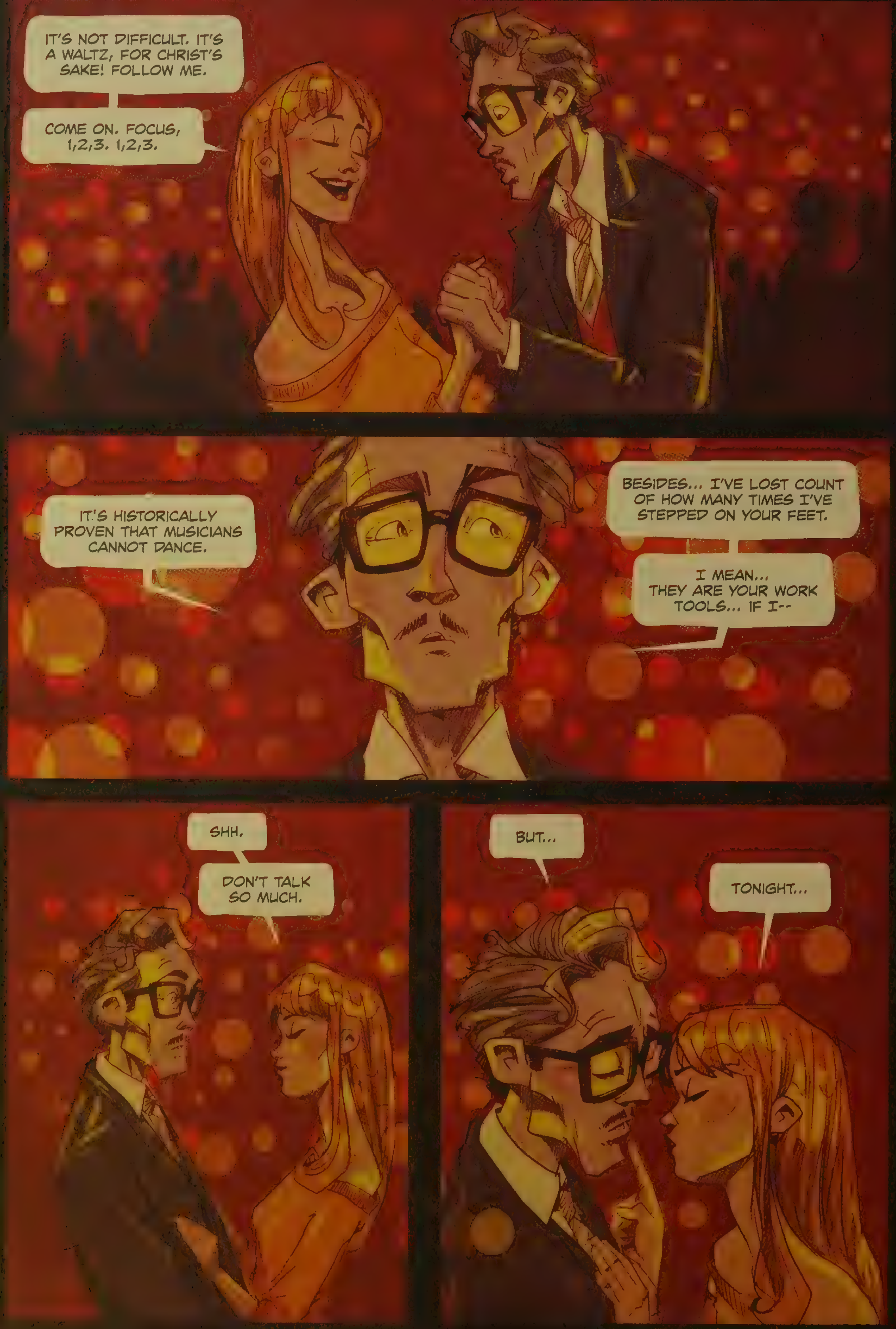

IT SEEMED NEITHER OF US WANTED THE EVENING TO END.
ENTRÉE
SUDDENLY, THE RAIN STOPPED AND IT TURNED INTO A WONDERFUL NIGHT.
...IT'S LIKE AN EDIBLE CLOUD, ISN'T IT?
WOW! JULIEN! LOOK!

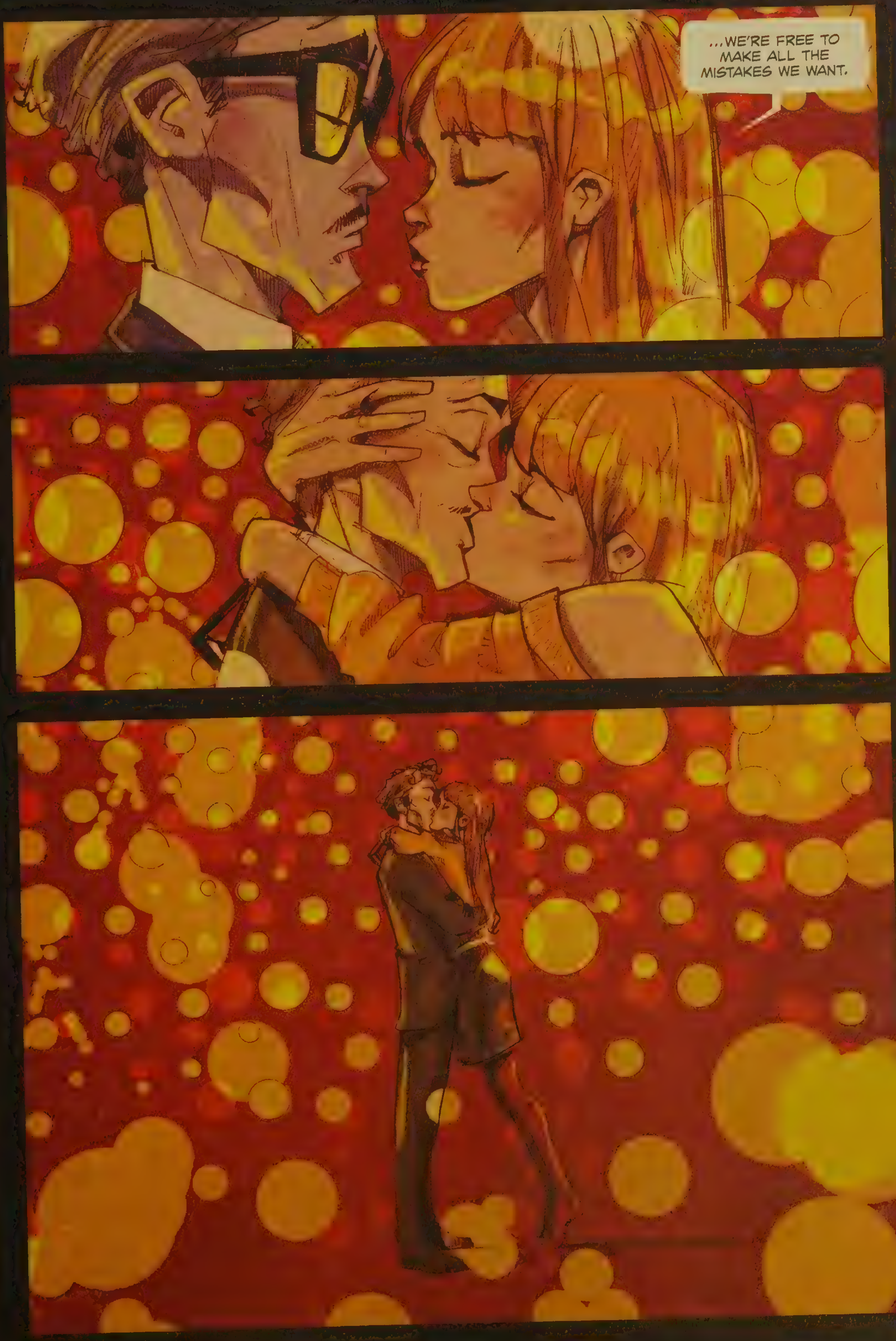

WHOA.
SOMETIMES I THINK THEY DANCE BETTER THAN ME. THEY HAVE TOTAL FREEDOM.
THEY CAN MAKE MISTAKES.
I WISH I WAS LIKE THAT, TOO.

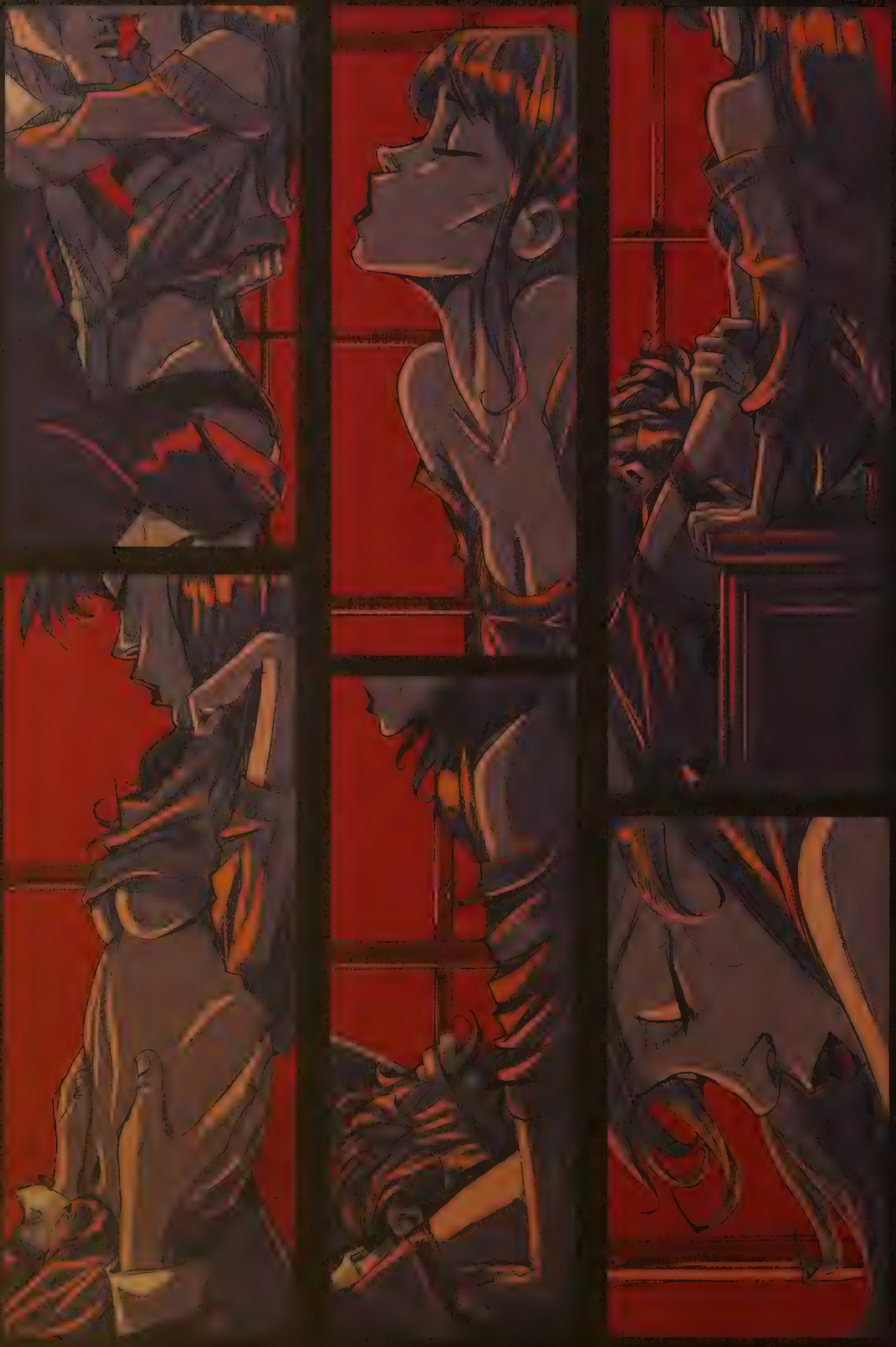

LOOK. THERE'S YOUR OPPORTUNITY.
CAN CAN
PHOTOGR
GRAPHE
SAY CHEESE.

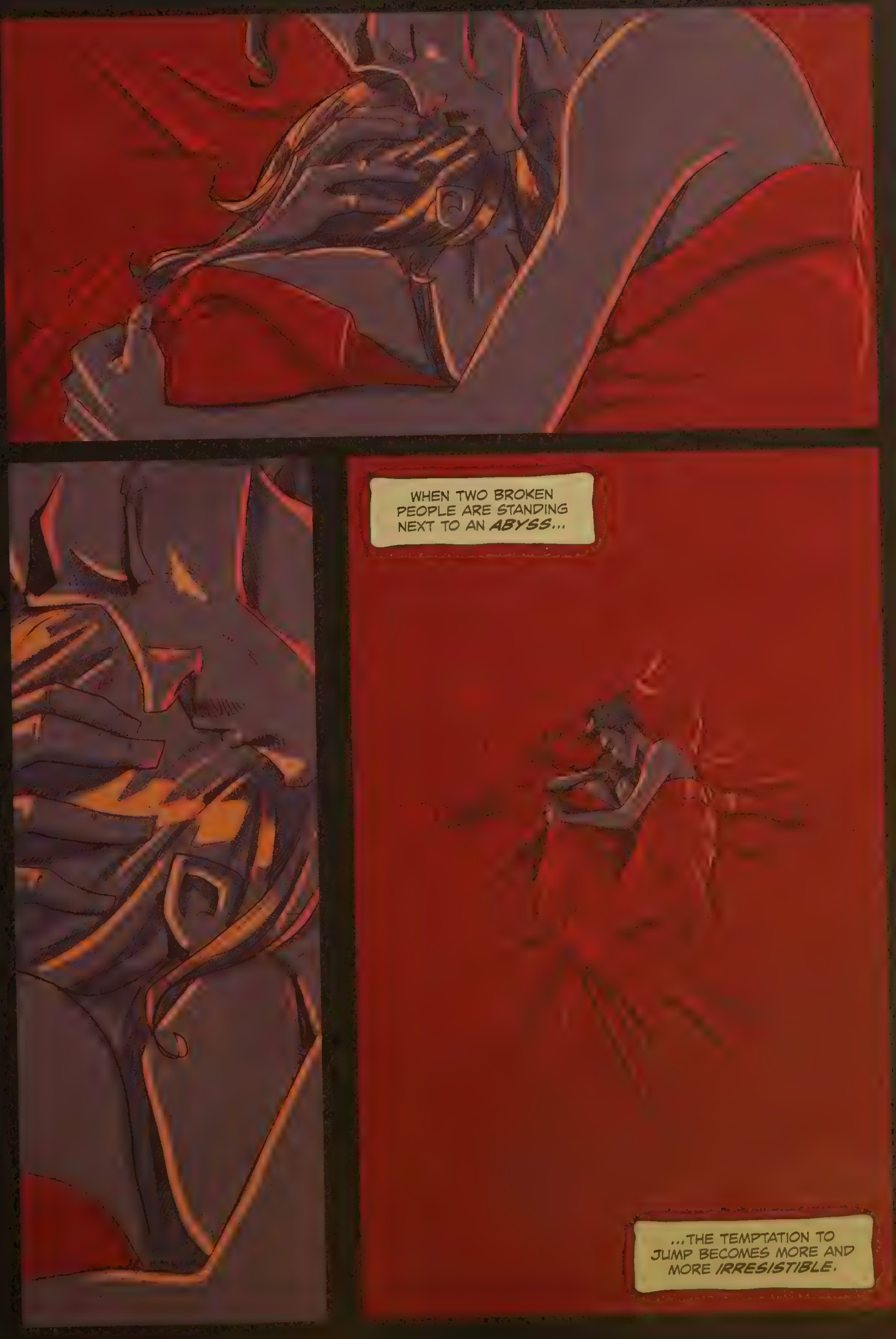

...WHAT SHOULD WE DRINK TO?
TO FREEDOM. OBVIOUSLY!
TO FREEDOM!

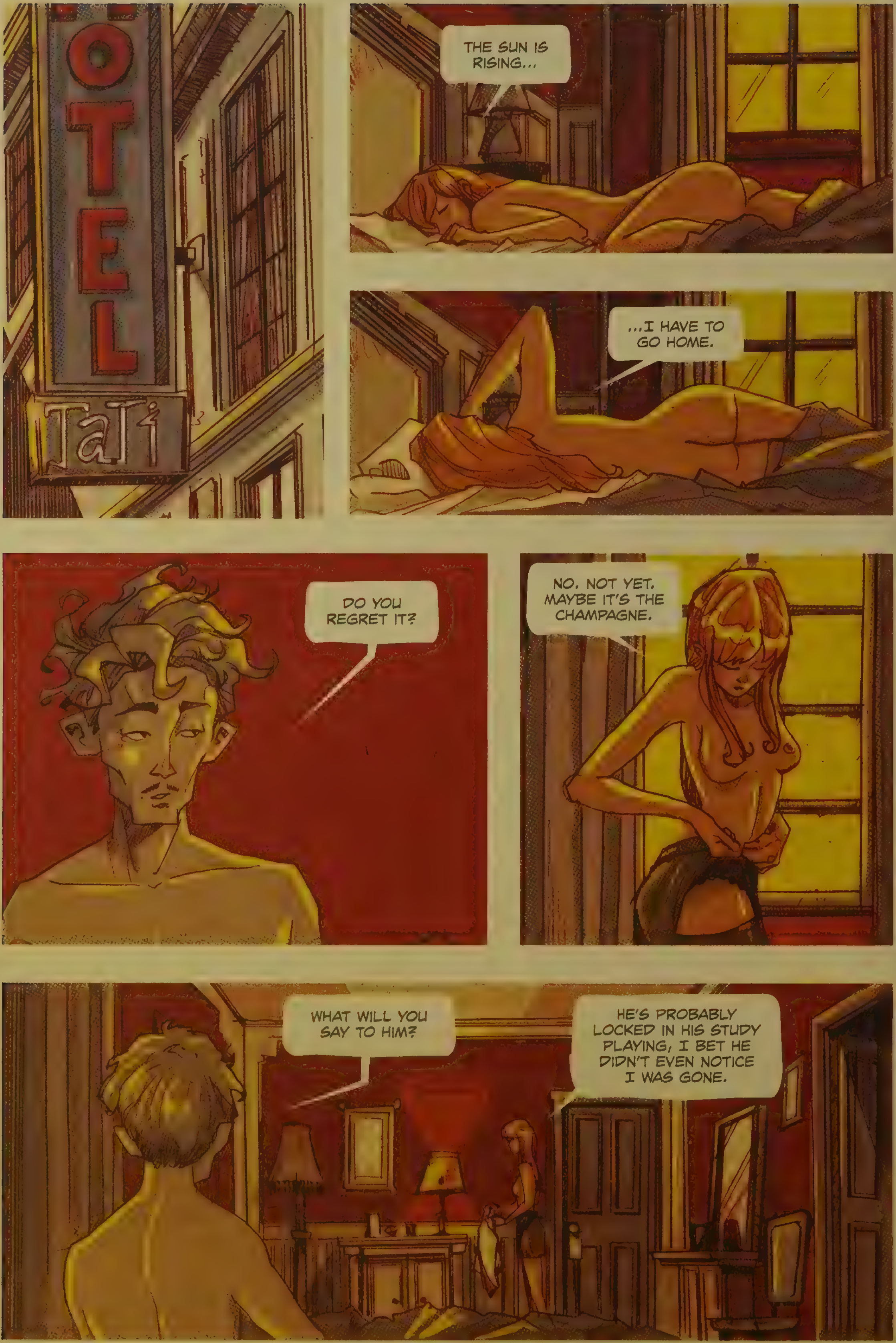

HUMPH. I'M STARTING TO GET REALLY SLEEPY.
OH, I KNOW!
LET'S *DANCE!*
ANNE...
COME ON, JULIEN! LET'S GO!

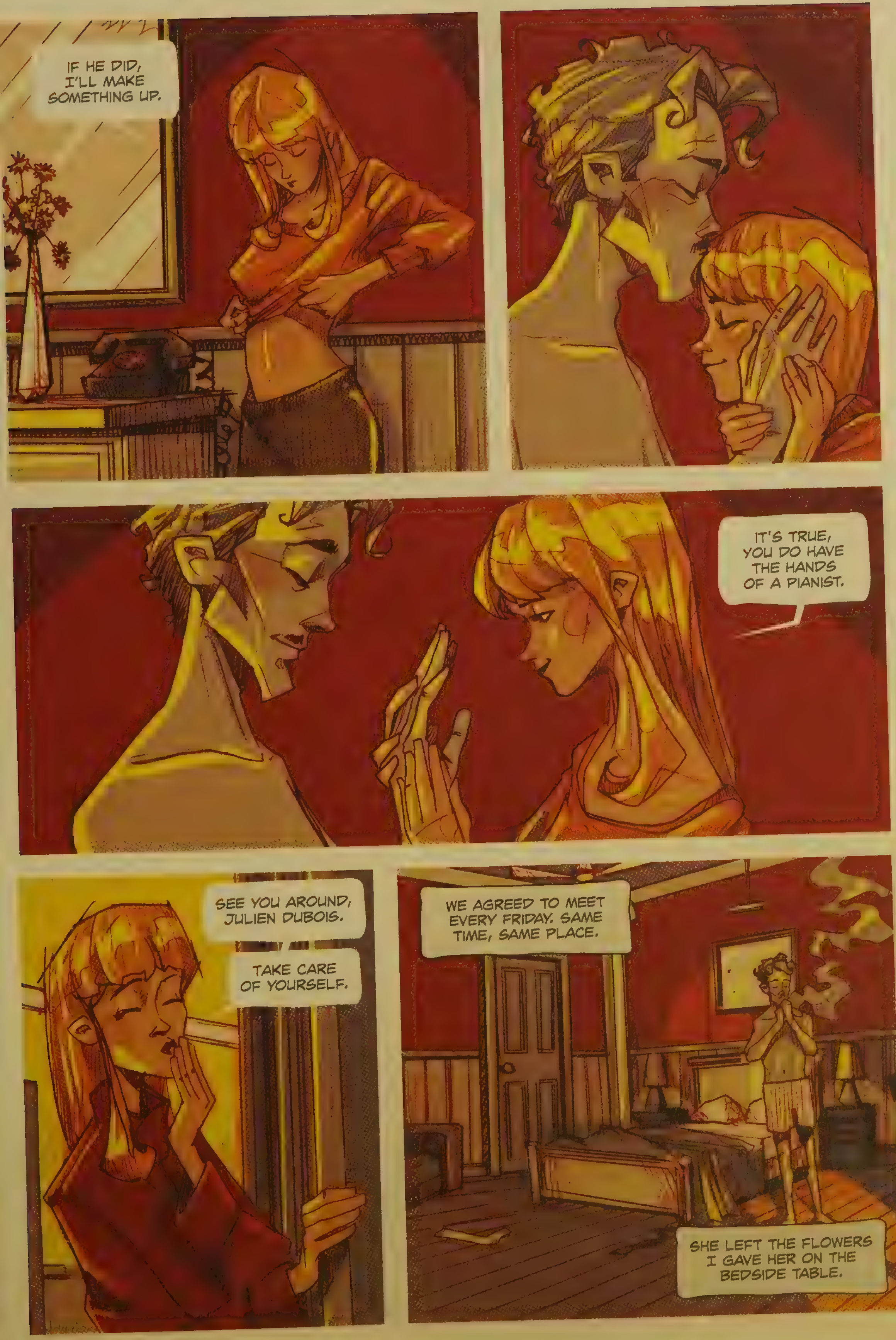

IT'S NOT DIFFICULT. IT'S A WALTZ, FOR CHRIST'S SAKE! FOLLOW ME.
COME ON. FOCUS, 1,2,3. 1,2,3.
IT'S HISTORICALLY PROVEN THAT MUSICIANS CANNOT DANCE.
BESIDES... I'VE LOST COUNT OF HOW MANY TIMES I'VE STEPPED ON YOUR FEET.
I MEAN... THEY ARE YOUR WORK TOOLS... IF I--
SHH.
DON'T TALK SO MUCH.
BUT...
TONIGHT...

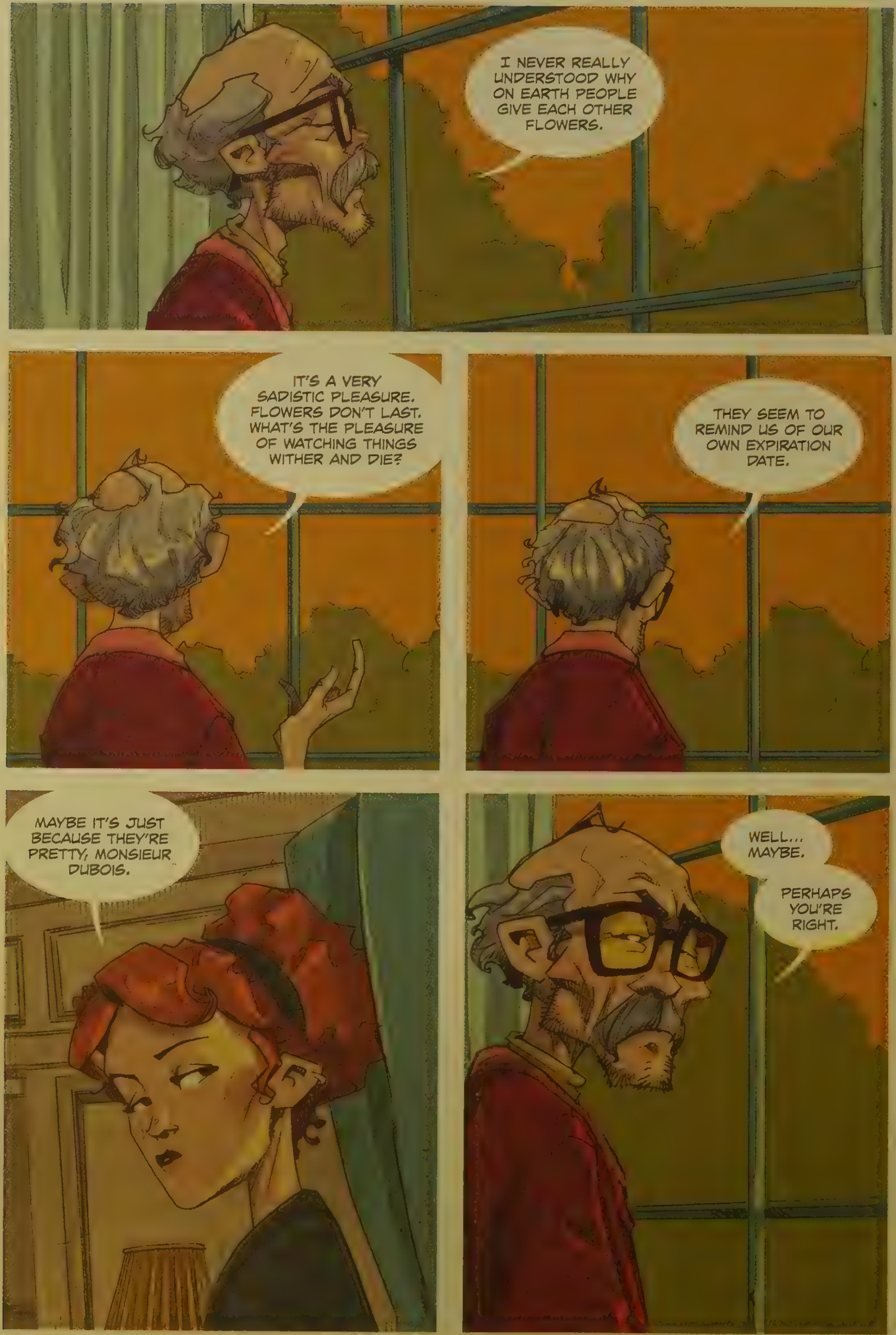

...WE'RE FREE TO MAKE ALL THE MISTAKES WE WANT.

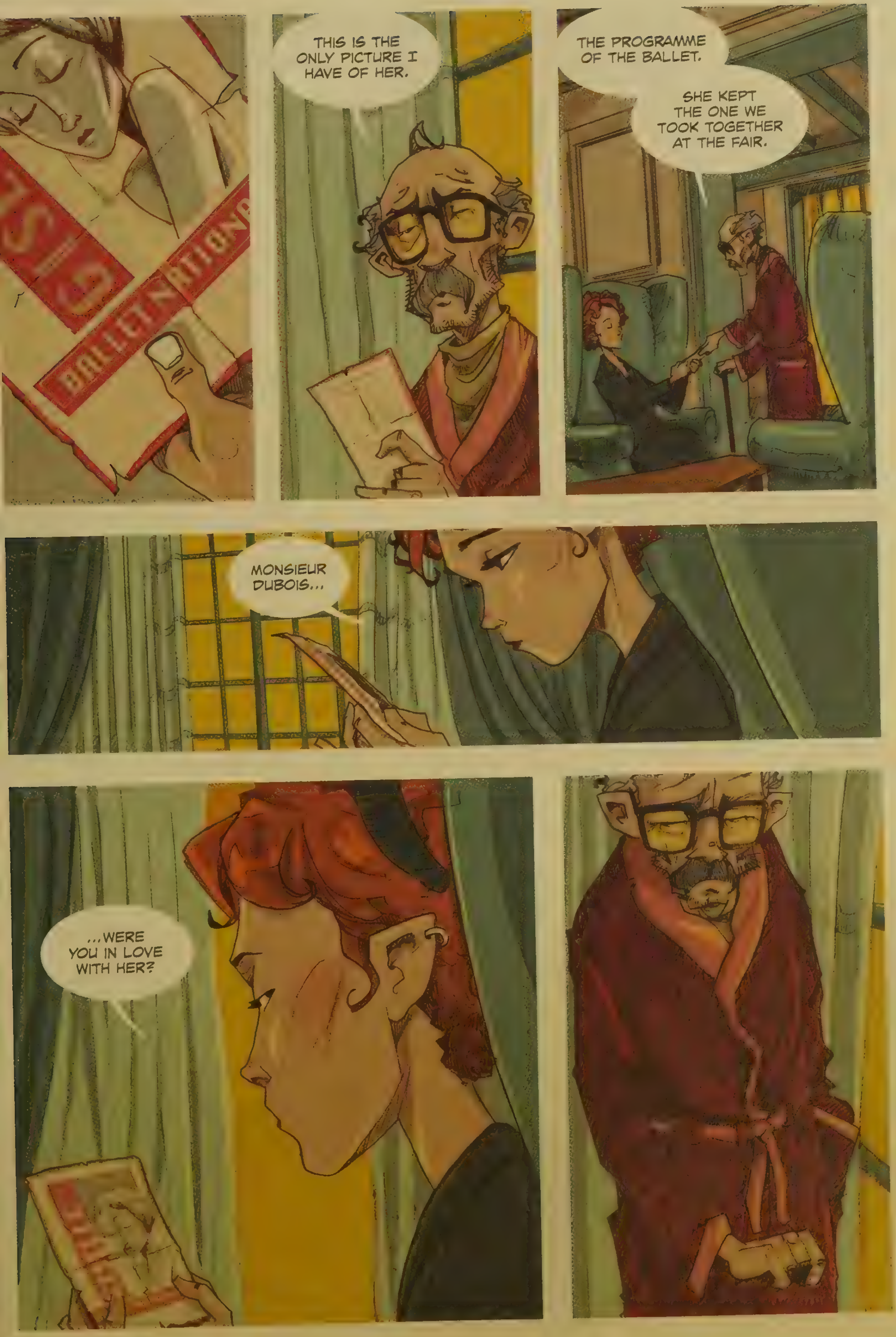


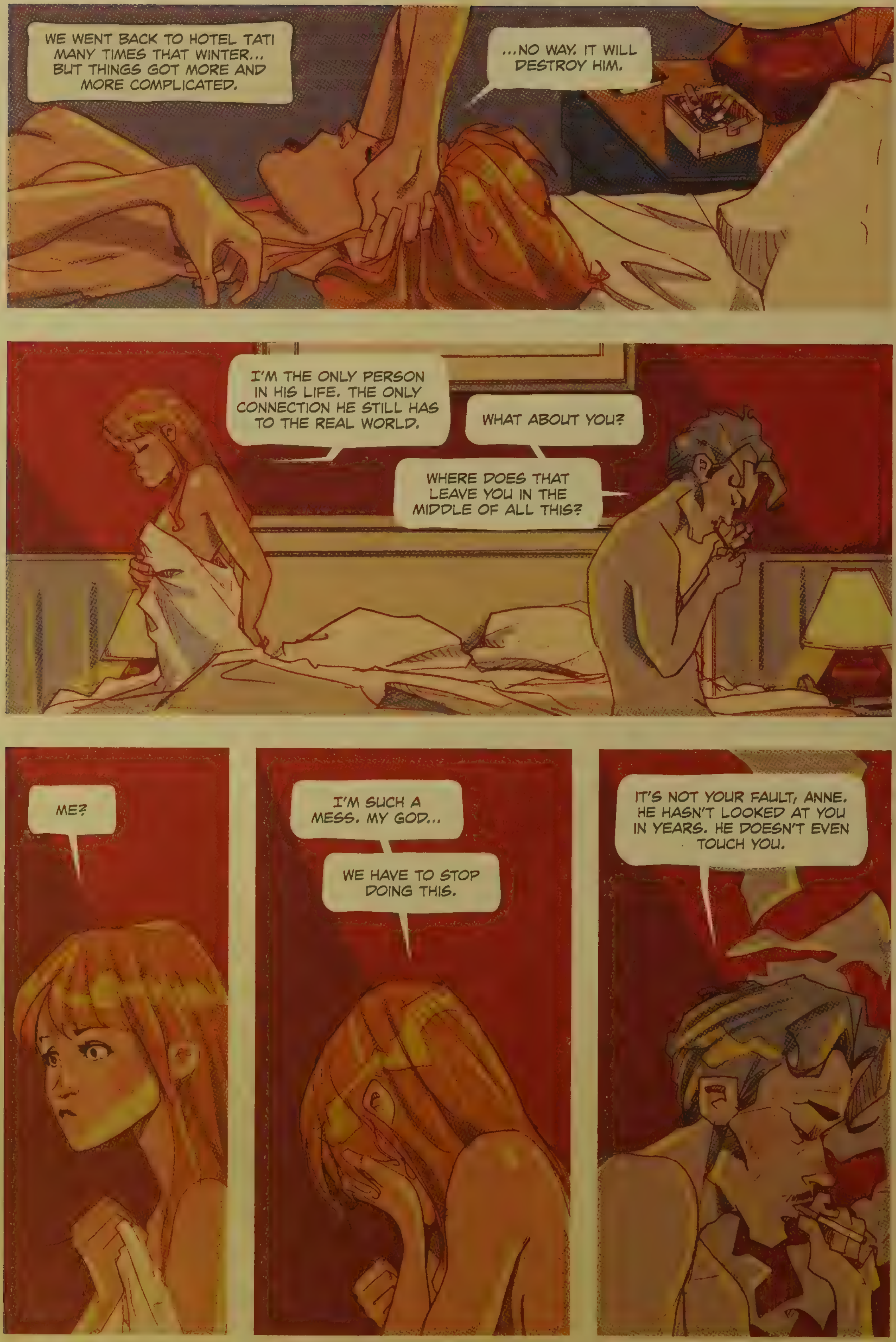

WHEN TWO BROKEN PEOPLE ARE STANDING NEXT TO AN *ABYSS*...
...THE TEMPTATION TO JUMP BECOMES MORE AND MORE *IRRESISTIBLE*.

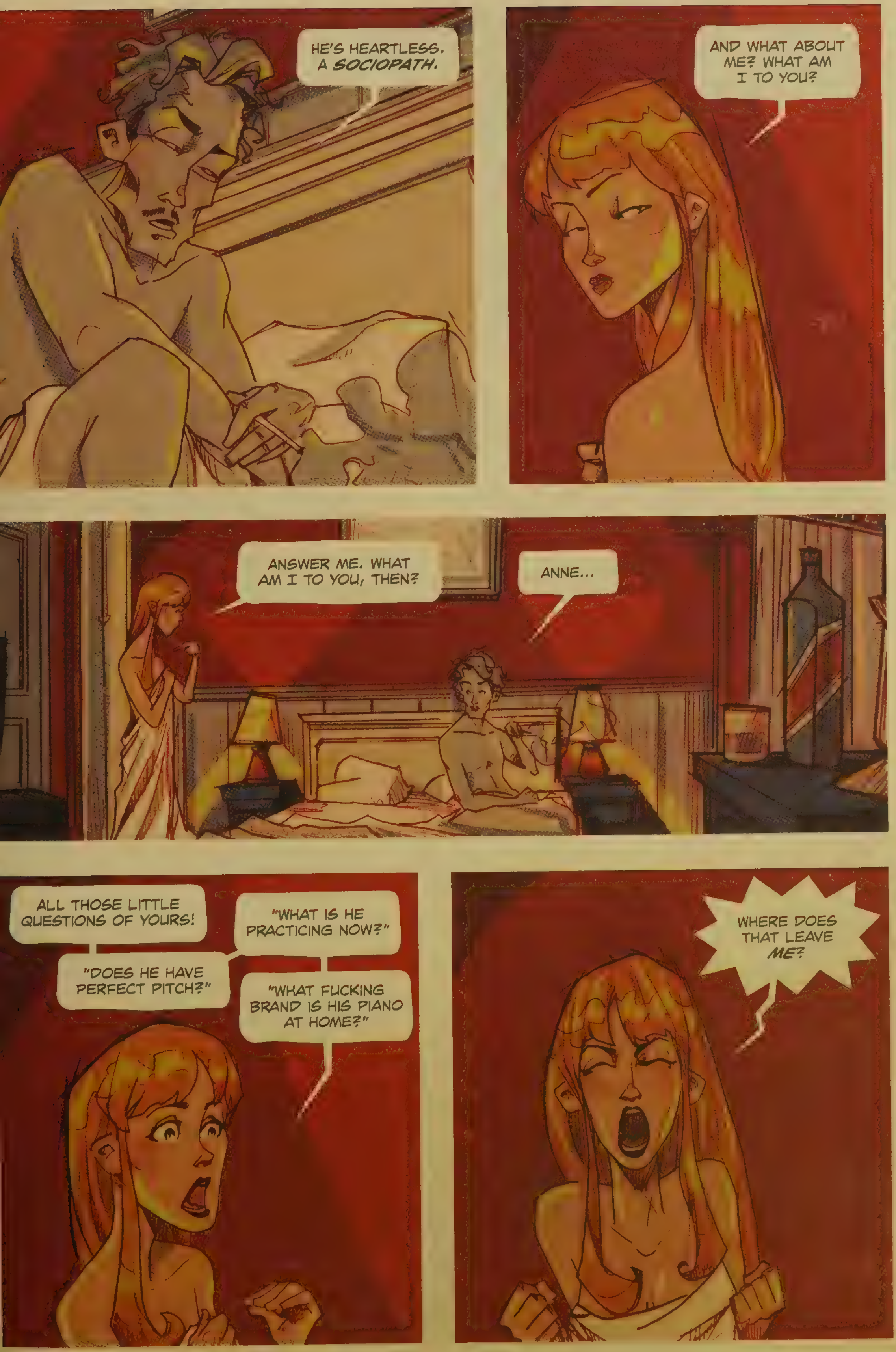

OTEL
Tati
THE SUN IS RISING...
...I HAVE TO GO HOME.
DO YOU REGRET IT?
NO. NOT YET. MAYBE IT'S THE CHAMPAGNE.
WHAT WILL YOU SAY TO HIM?
HE'S PROBABLY LOCKED IN HIS STUDY PLAYING, I BET HE DIDN'T EVEN NOTICE I WAS GONE.

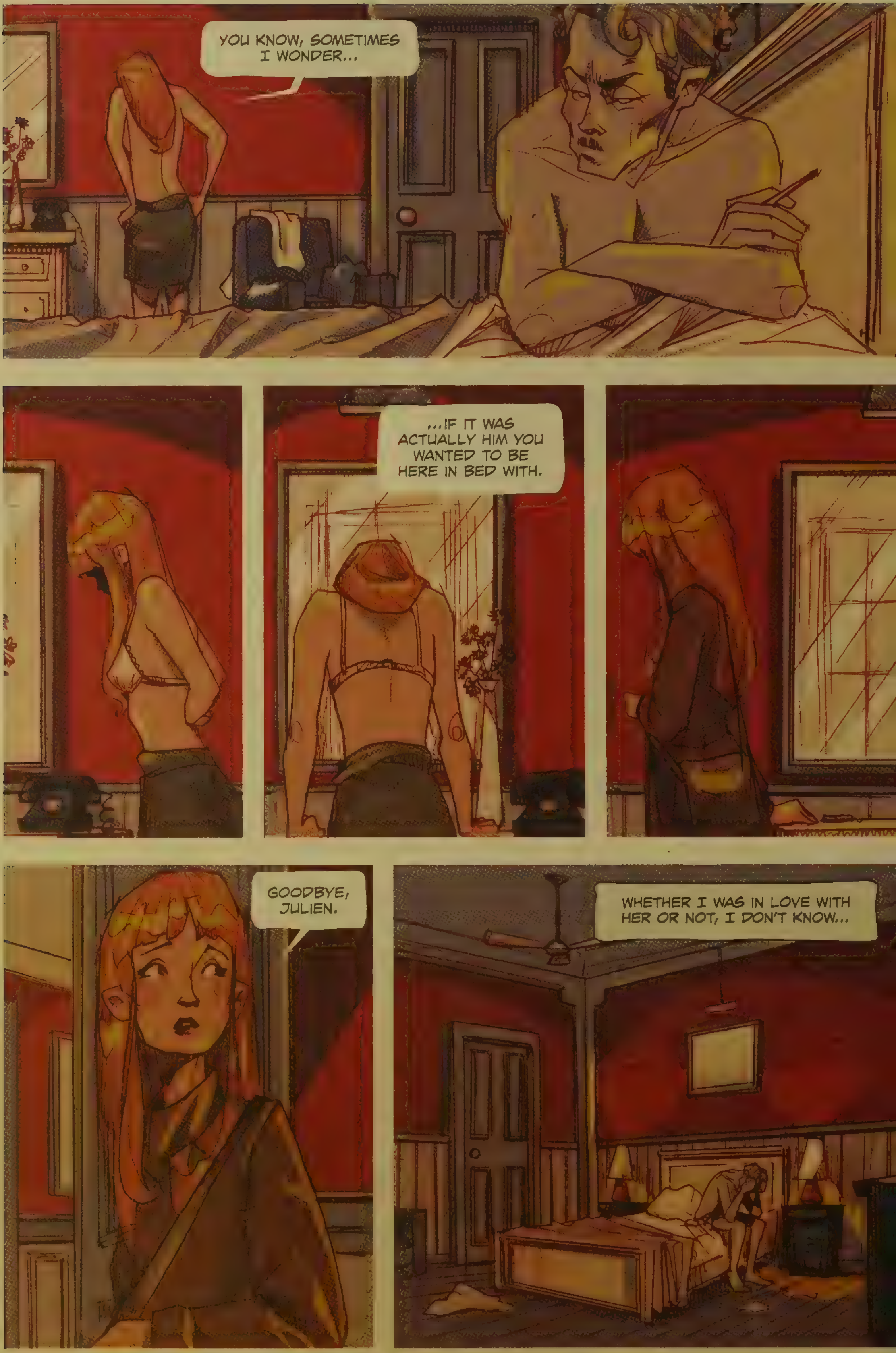

IF HE DID, I'LL MAKE SOMETHING UP.
IT'S TRUE, YOU DO HAVE THE HANDS OF A PIANIST.
SEE YOU AROUND, JULIEN DUBOIS.
TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.
WE AGREED TO MEET EVERY FRIDAY. SAME TIME, SAME PLACE.
SHE LEFT THE FLOWERS I GAVE HER ON THE BEDSIDE TABLE.

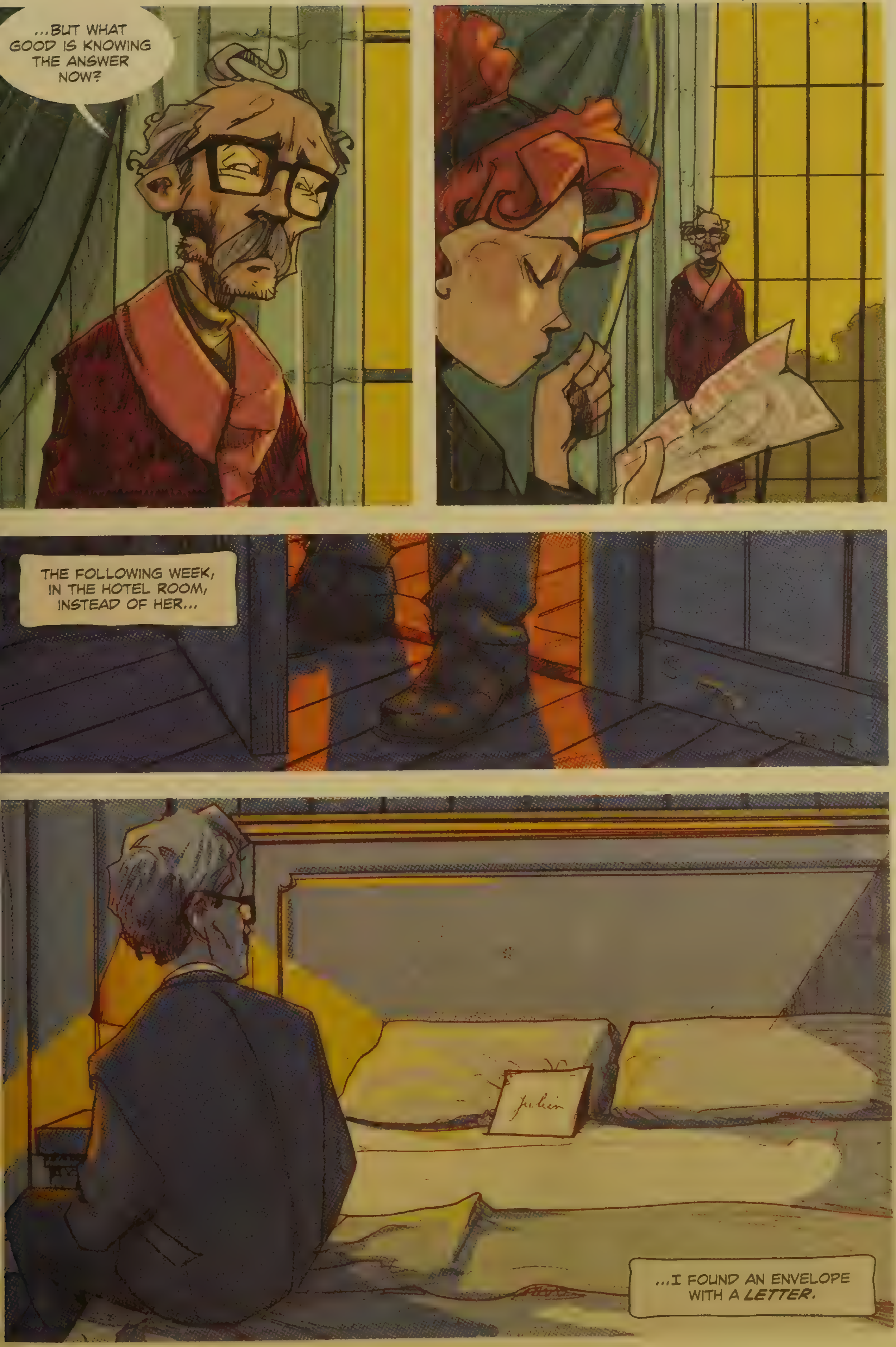

I NEVER REALLY UNDERSTOOD WHY ON EARTH PEOPLE GIVE EACH OTHER FLOWERS.
IT'S A VERY SADISTIC PLEASURE. FLOWERS DON'T LAST. WHAT'S THE PLEASURE OF WATCHING THINGS WITHER AND DIE?
THEY SEEM TO REMIND US OF OUR OWN EXPIRATION DATE.
MAYBE IT'S JUST BECAUSE THEY'RE PRETTY, MONSIEUR DUBOIS.
WELL... MAYBE.
PERHAPS YOU'RE RIGHT.

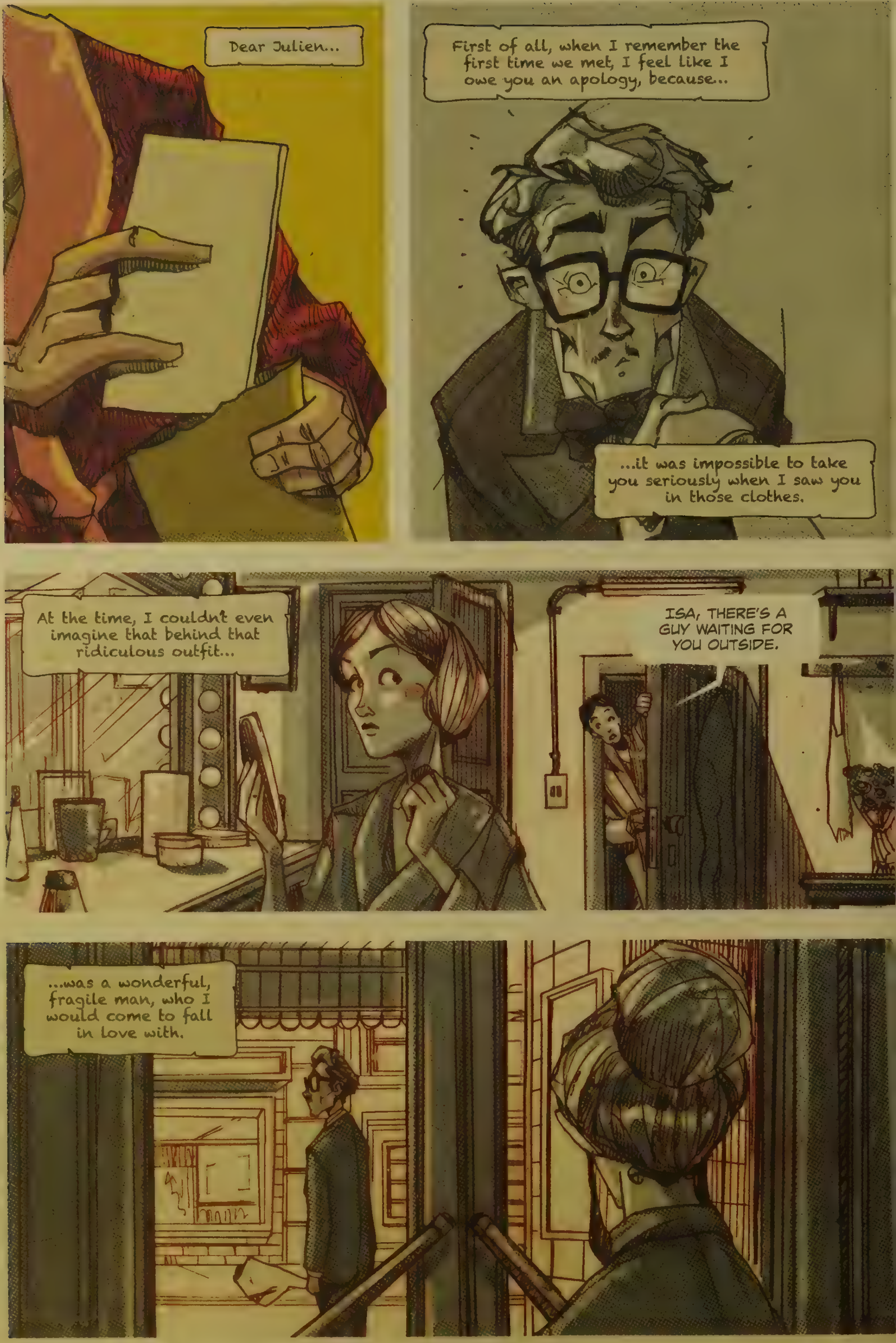

THIS IS THE ONLY PICTURE I HAVE OF HER.
THE PROGRAMME OF THE BALLET.
SHE KEPT THE ONE WE TOOK TOGETHER AT THE FAIR.
MONSIEUR DUBOIS...
...WERE YOU IN LOVE WITH HER?

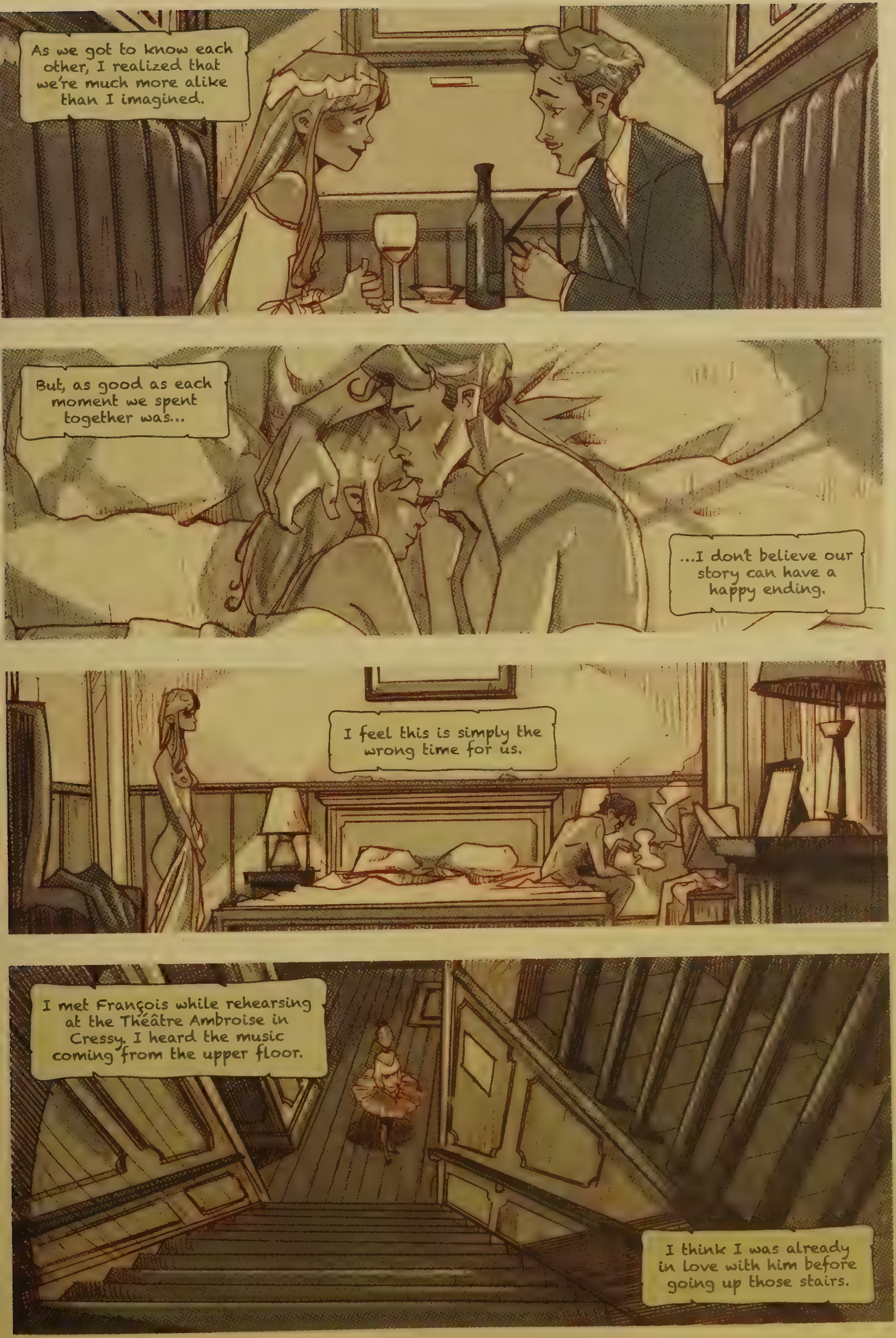

WE WENT BACK TO HOTEL TATI MANY TIMES THAT WINTER... BUT THINGS GOT MORE AND MORE COMPLICATED.
...NO WAY. IT WILL DESTROY HIM.
I'M THE ONLY PERSON IN HIS LIFE. THE ONLY CONNECTION HE STILL HAS TO THE REAL WORLD.
WHAT ABOUT YOU?
WHERE DOES THAT LEAVE YOU IN THE MIDDLE OF ALL THIS?
ME?
I'M SUCH A MESS. MY GOD...
WE HAVE TO STOP DOING THIS.
IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT, ANNE. HE HASN'T LOOKED AT YOU IN YEARS. HE DOESN'T EVEN TOUCH YOU.

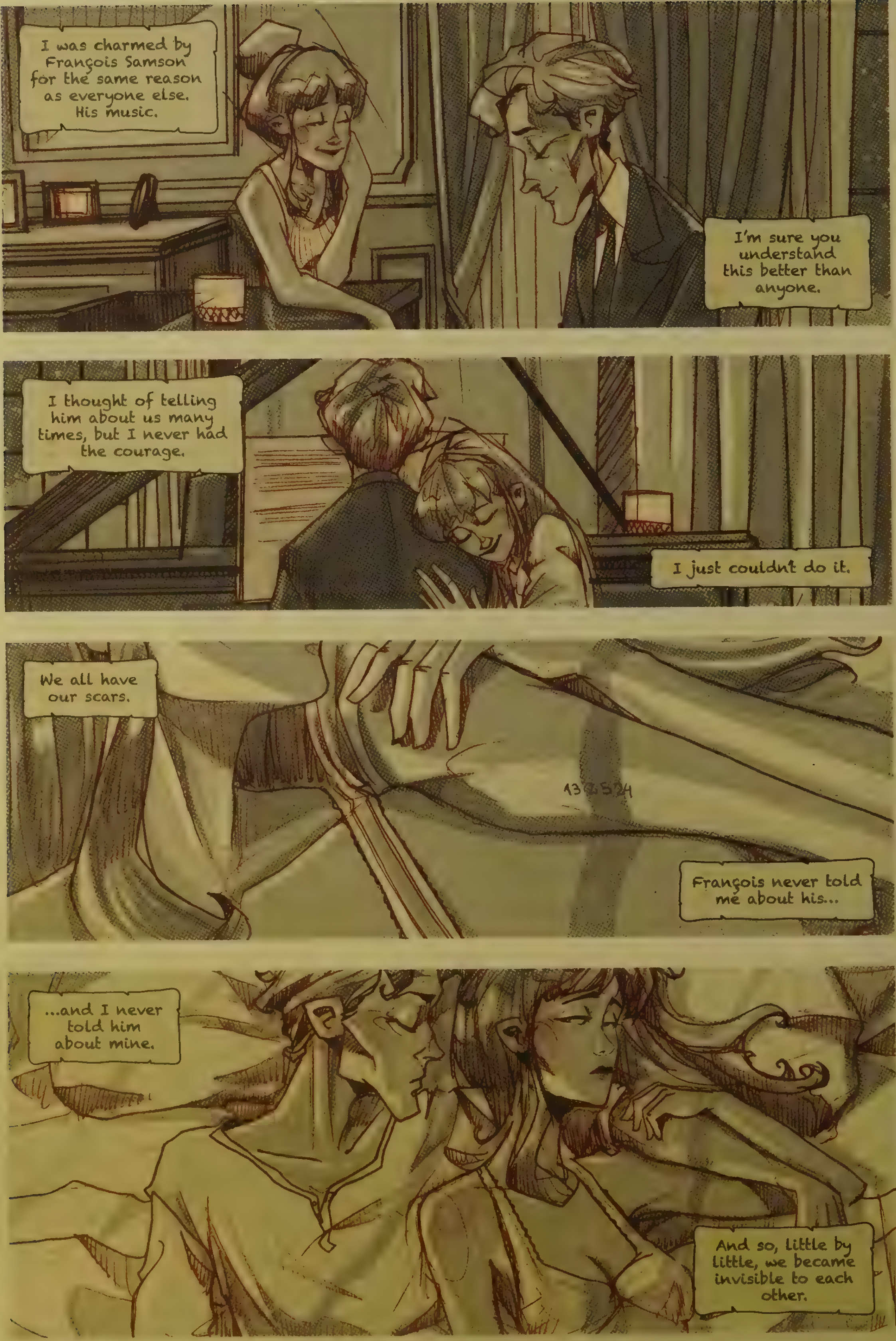

HE'S HEARTLESS. A *SOCIOPATH.*
AND WHAT ABOUT ME? WHAT AM I TO YOU?
ANSWER ME. WHAT AM I TO YOU, THEN?
ANNE...
ALL THOSE LITTLE QUESTIONS OF YOURS!
"WHAT IS HE PRACTICING NOW?"
"DOES HE HAVE PERFECT PITCH?"
"WHAT FUCKING BRAND IS HIS PIANO AT HOME?"
WHERE DOES THAT LEAVE *ME?*

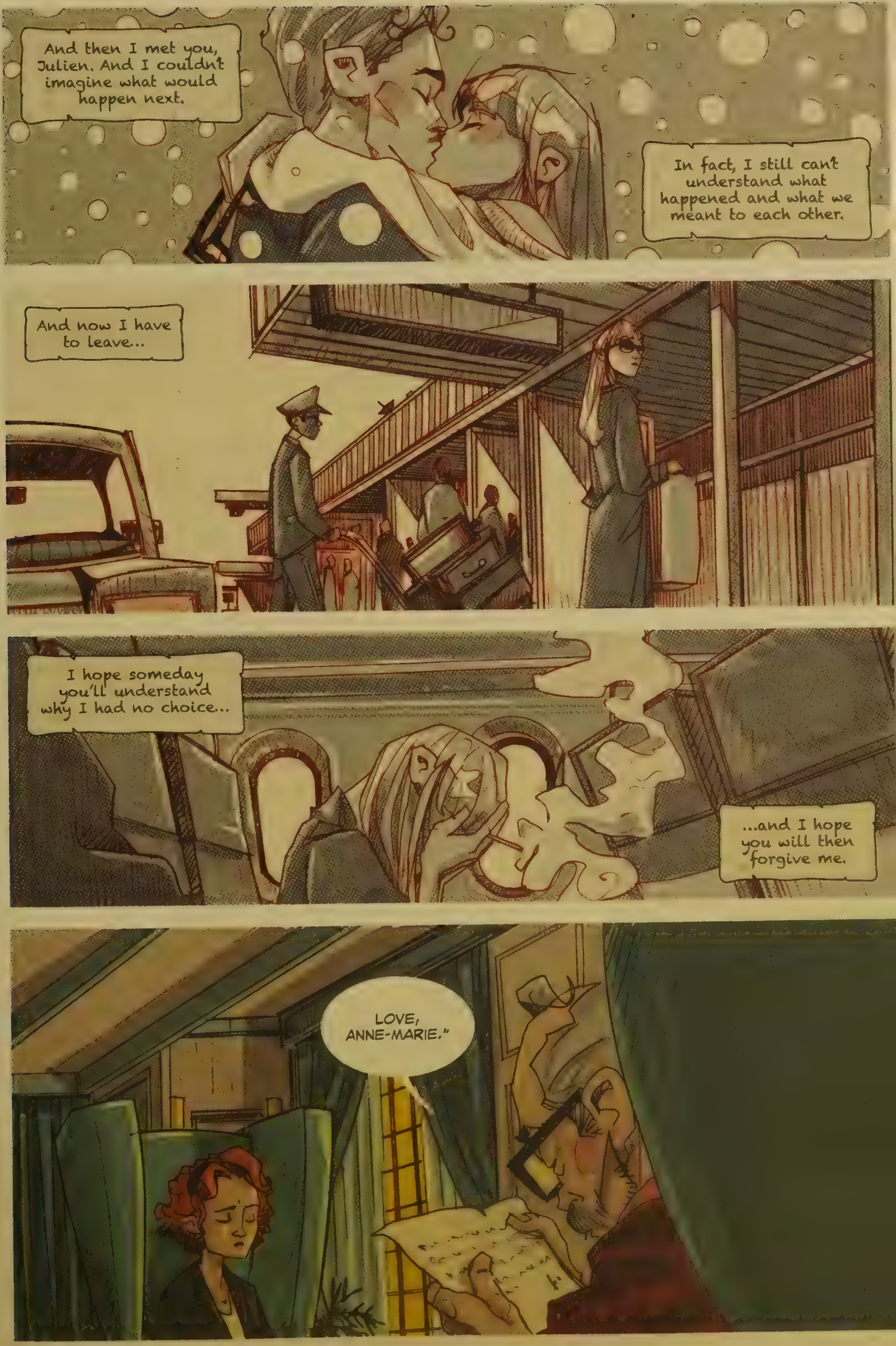

YOU KNOW, SOMETIMES I WONDER...
...IF IT WAS ACTUALLY HIM YOU WANTED TO BE HERE IN BED WITH.
GOODBYE, JULIEN.
WHETHER I WAS IN LOVE WITH HER OR NOT, I DON'T KNOW...

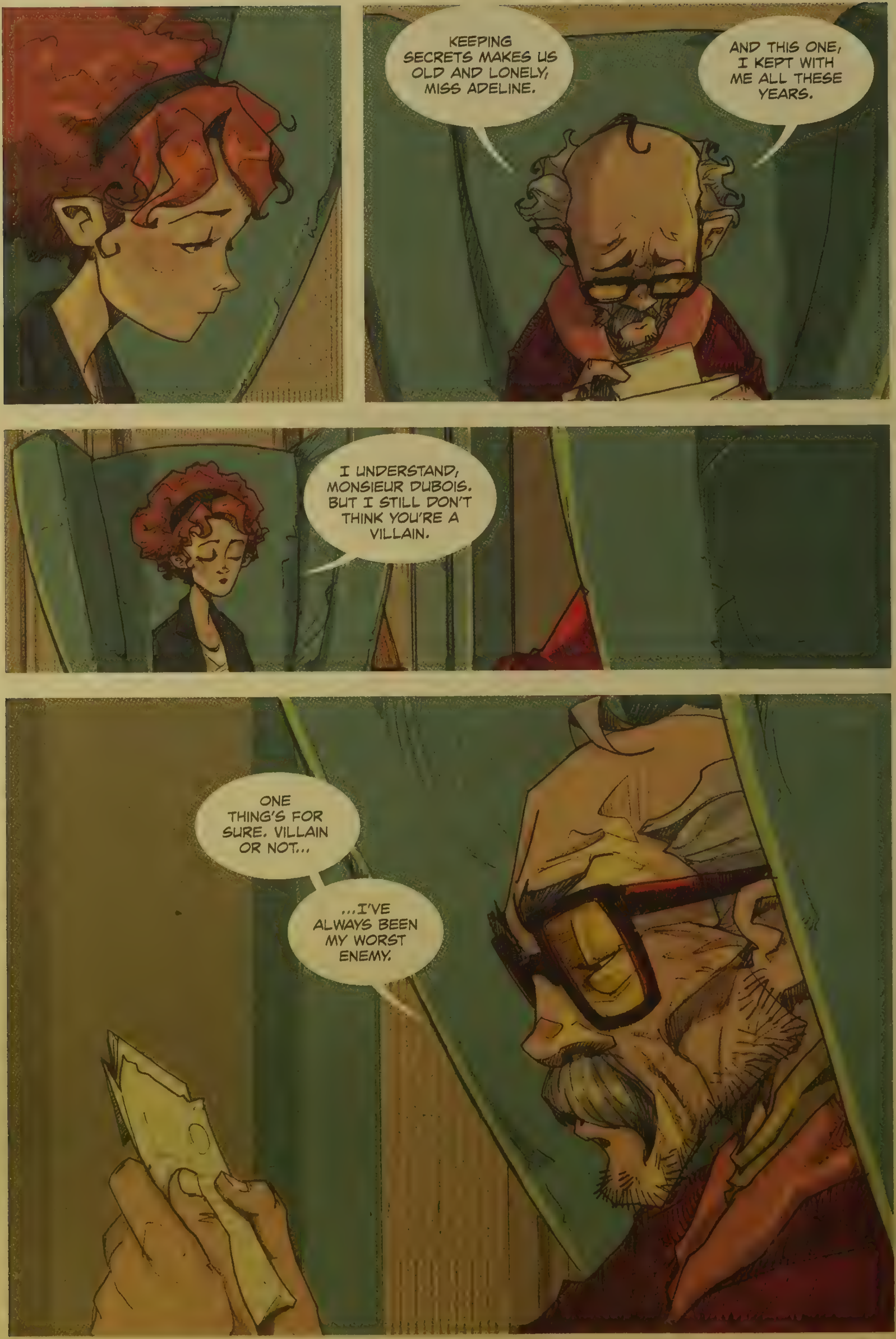

...BUT WHAT GOOD IS KNOWING THE ANSWER NOW?
THE FOLLOWING WEEK, IN THE HOTEL ROOM, INSTEAD OF HER...
julien
...I FOUND AN ENVELOPE WITH A *LETTER*.

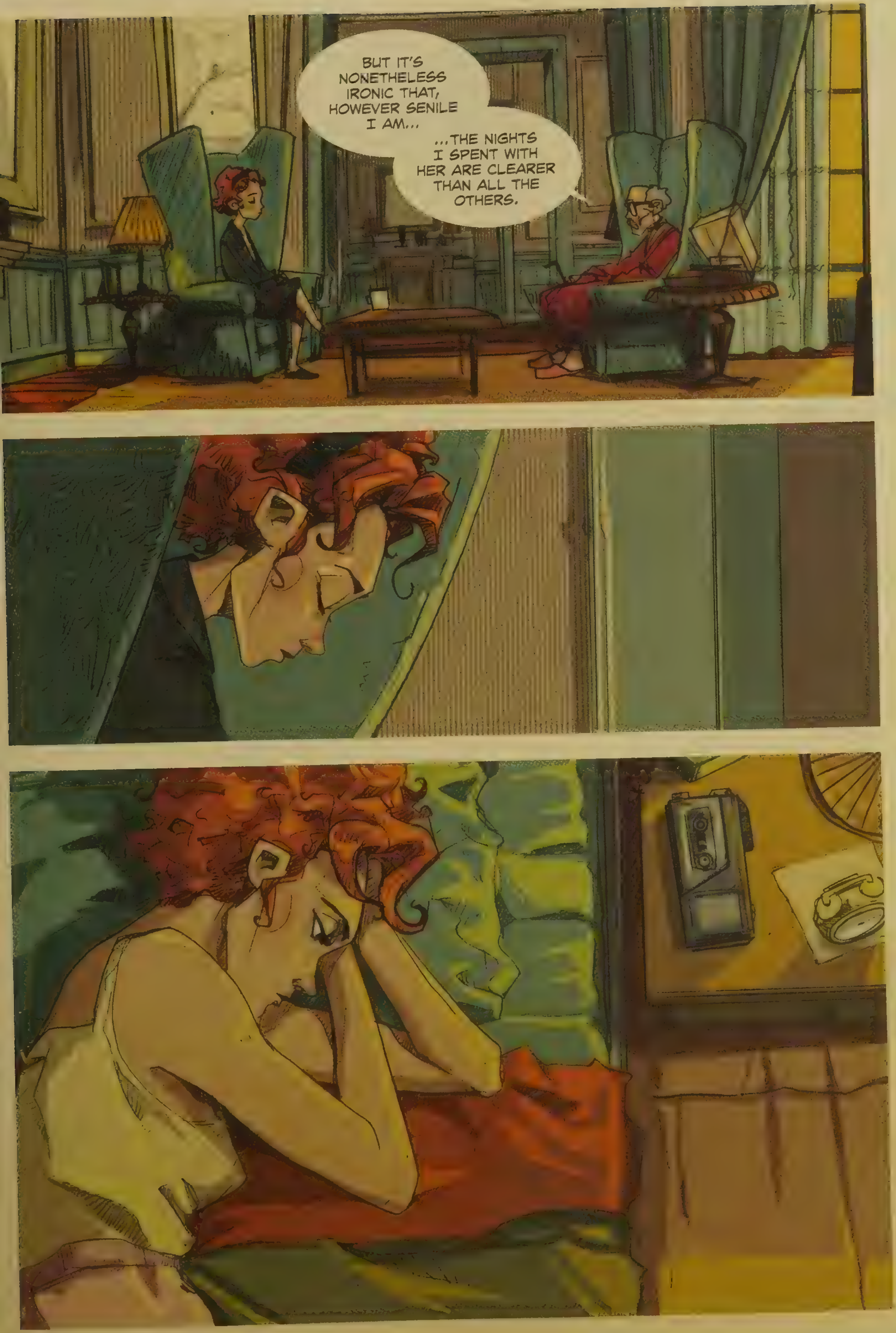

Dear Julien...
First of all, when I remember the first time we met, I feel like I owe you an apology, because...
...it was impossible to take you seriously when I saw you in those clothes.
At the time, I couldn't even imagine that behind that ridiculous outfit...
ISA, THERE'S A GUY WAITING FOR YOU OUTSIDE.
...was a wonderful, fragile man, who I would come to fall in love with.

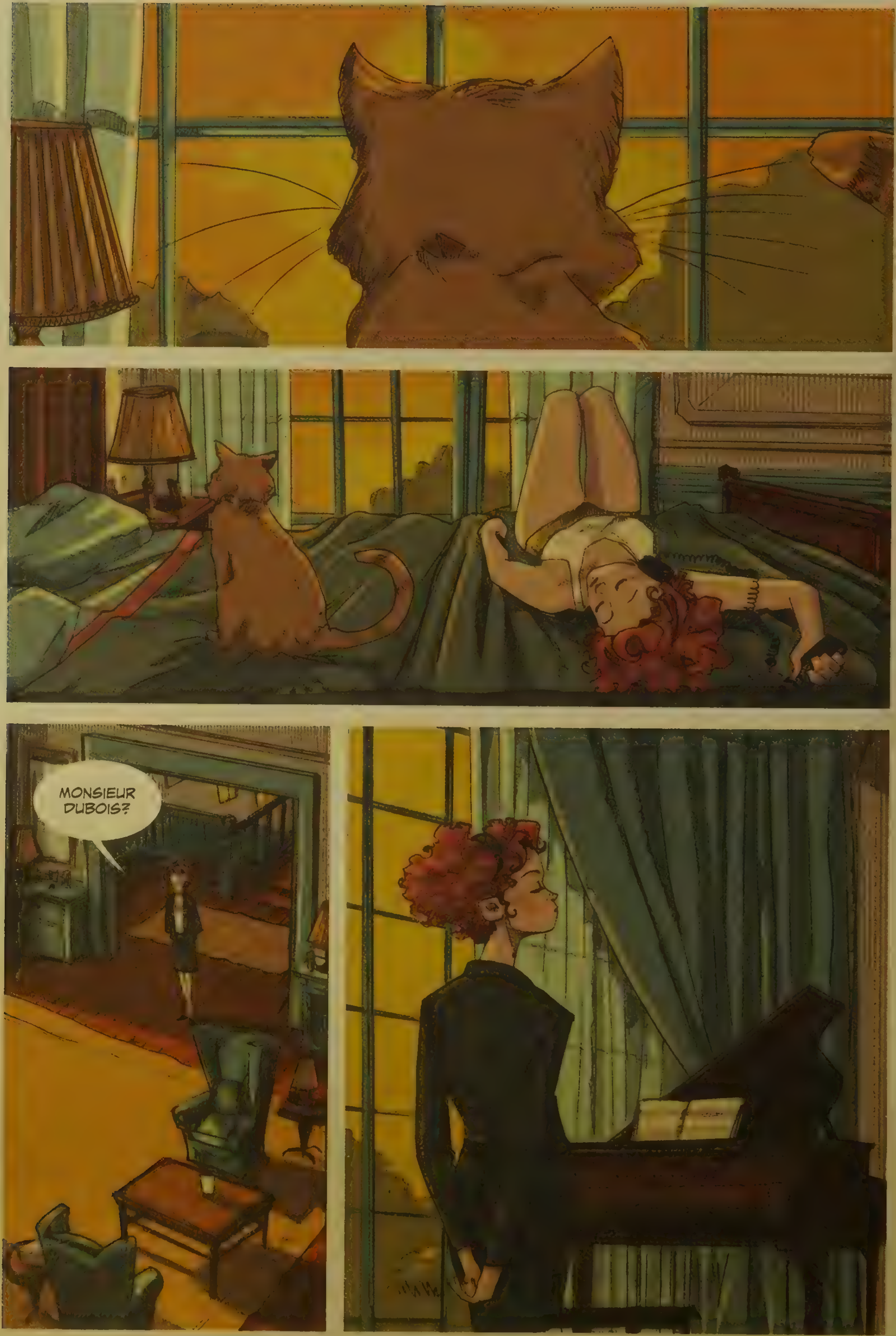

As we got to know each other, I realized that we're much more alike than I imagined.
But, as good as each moment we spent together was...
...I don't believe our story can have a happy ending.
I feel this is simply the wrong time for us.
I met François while rehearsing at the Théâtre Ambroise in Cressy. I heard the music coming from the upper floor.
I think I was already in love with him before going up those stairs.

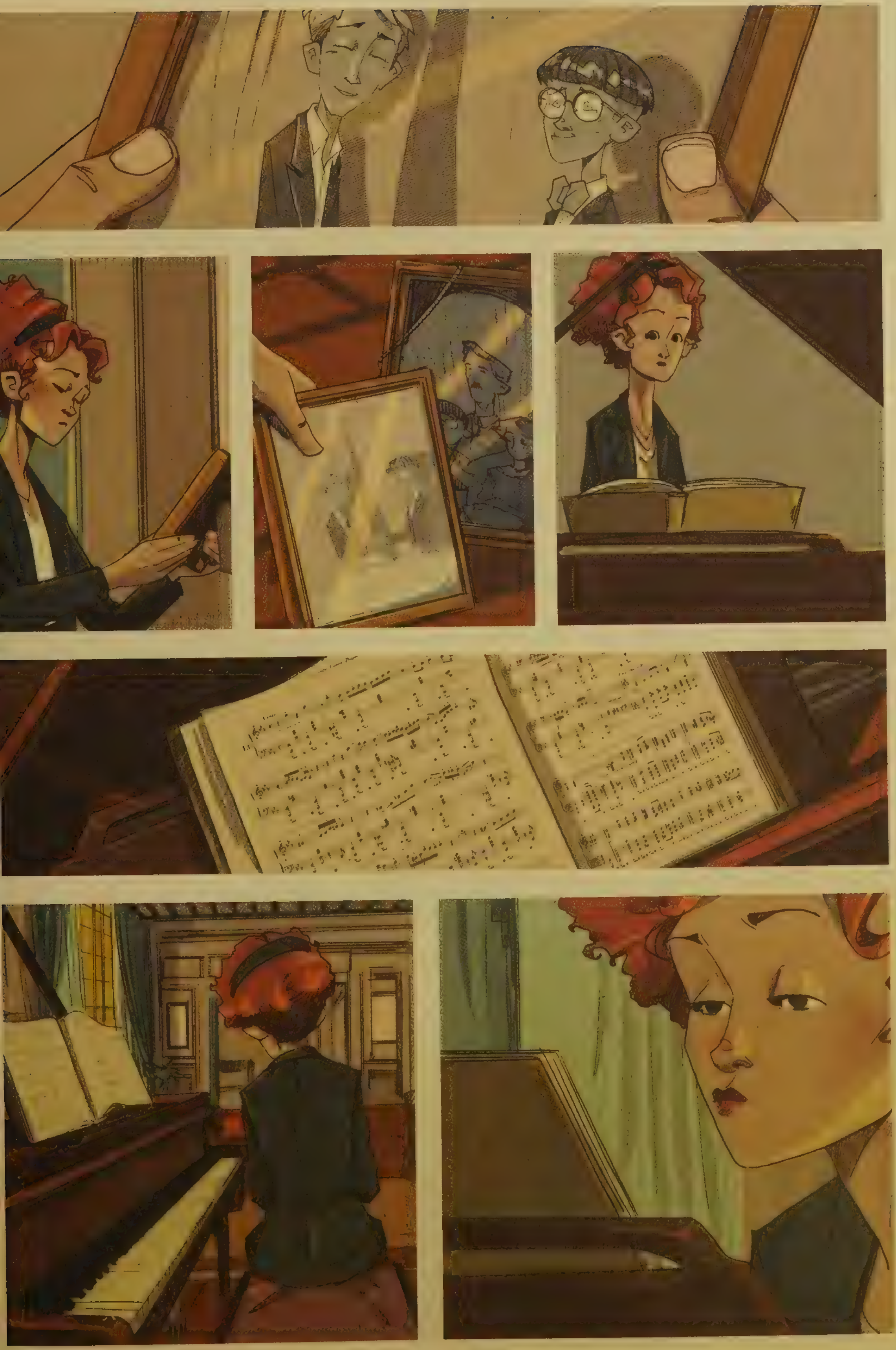

I was charmed by François Samson for the same reason as everyone else. His music.
I'm sure you understand this better than anyone.
I thought of telling him about us many times, but I never had the courage.
I just couldn't do it.
We all have our scars.
132524
François never told me about his...
...and I never told him about mine.
And so, little by little, we became invisible to each other.

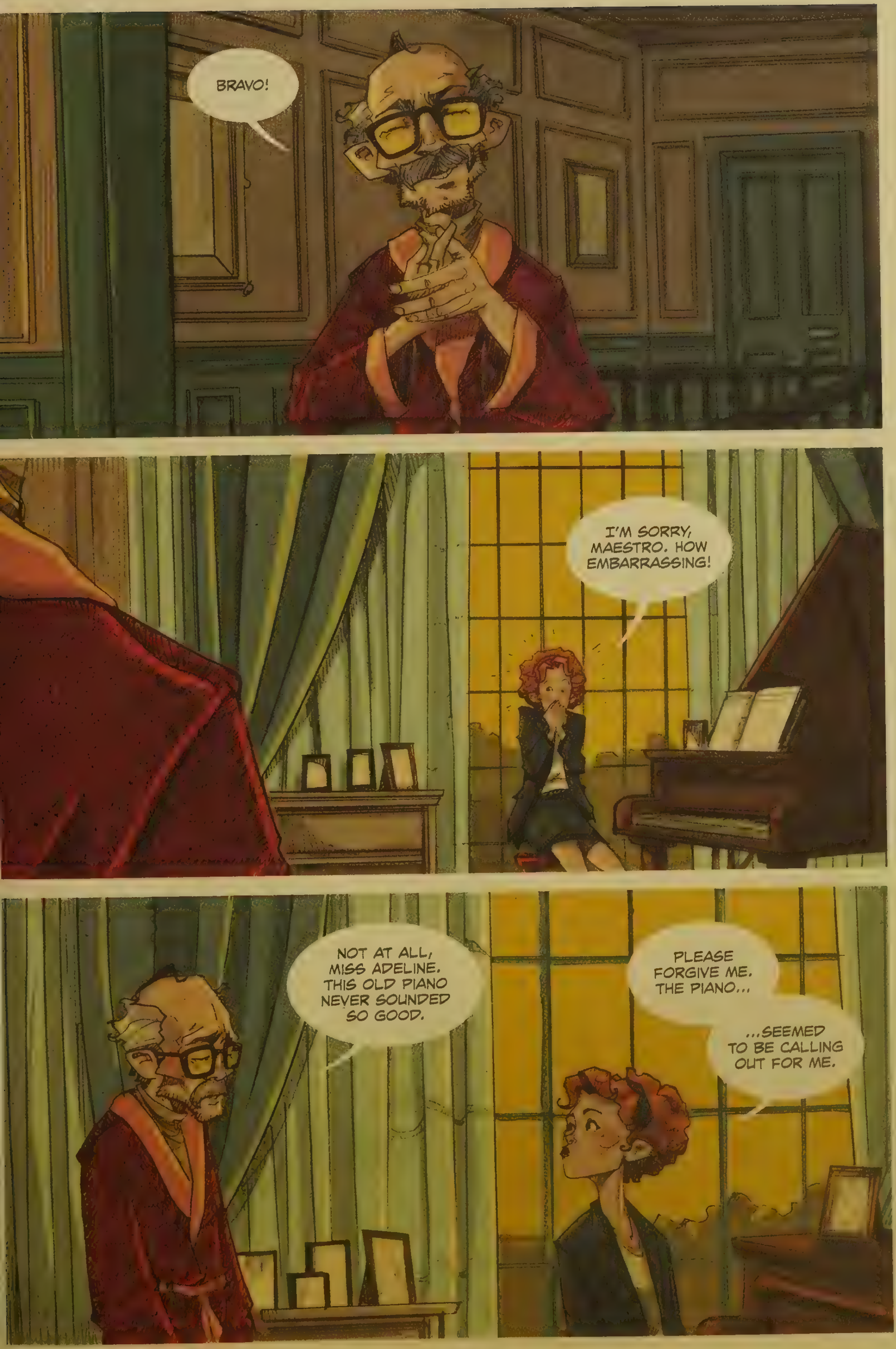

And then I met you, Julien. And I couldn't imagine what would happen next.
In fact, I still can't understand what happened and what we meant to each other.
And now I have to leave...
I hope someday you'll understand why I had no choice...
...and I hope you will then forgive me.
LOVE, ANNE-MARIE."

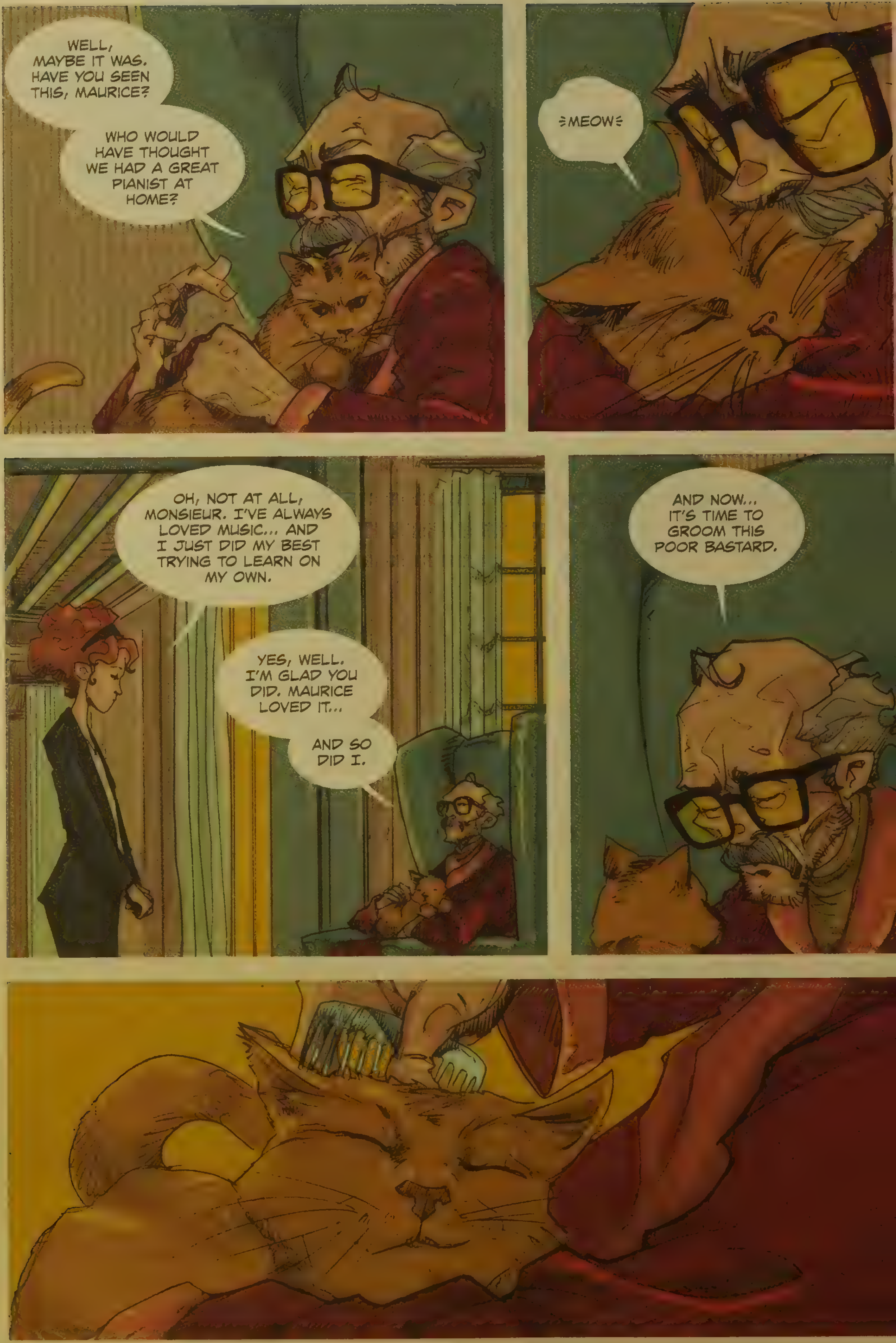

KEEPING SECRETS MAKES US OLD AND LONELY, MISS ADELINE.
AND THIS ONE, I KEPT WITH ME ALL THESE YEARS.
I UNDERSTAND, MONSIEUR DUBOIS. BUT I STILL DON'T THINK YOU'RE A VILLAIN.
ONE THING'S FOR SURE. VILLAIN OR NOT...
...I'VE ALWAYS BEEN MY WORST ENEMY.

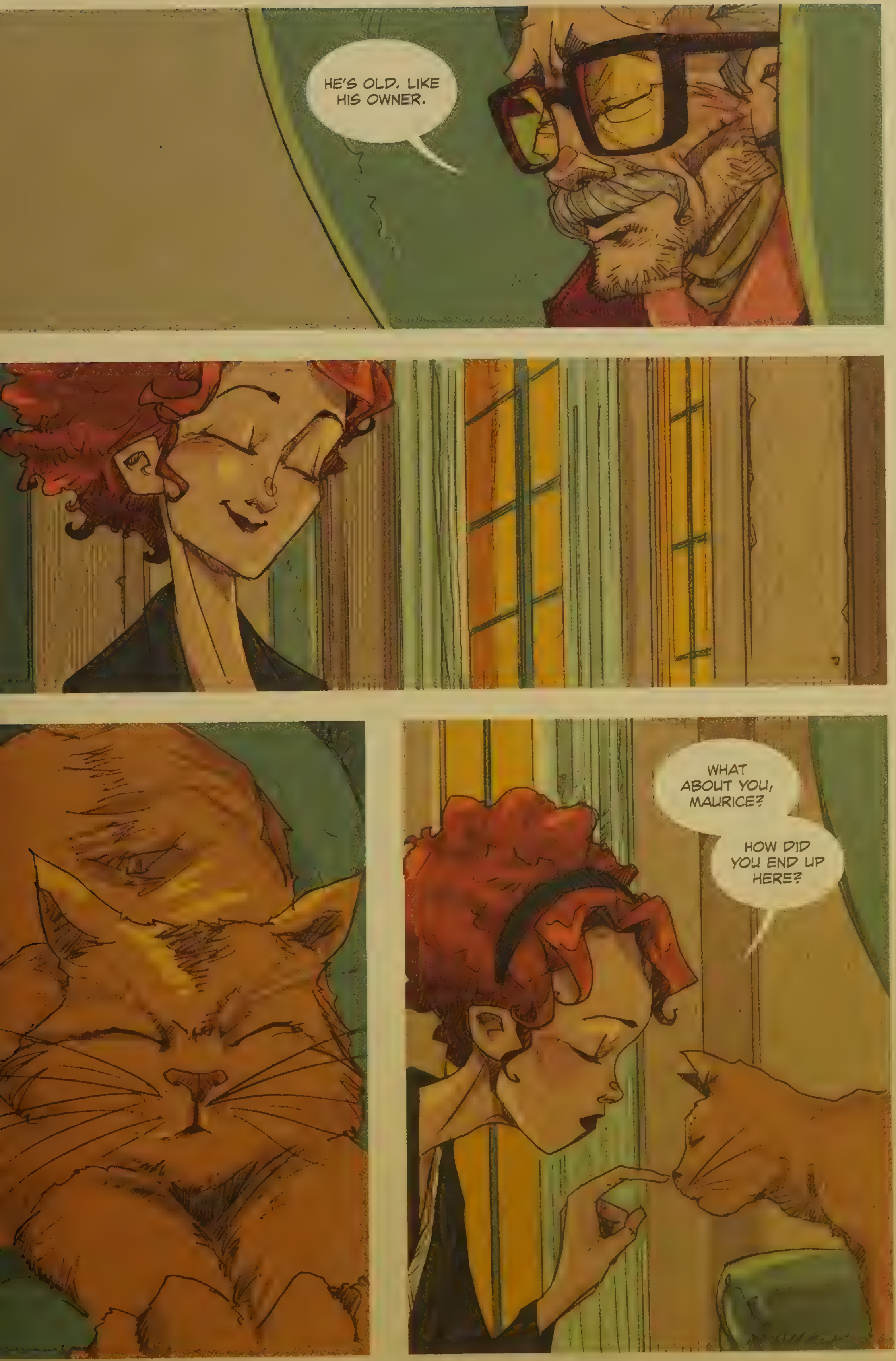

BUT IT'S NONETHELESS IRONIC THAT, HOWEVER SENILE I AM...
...THE NIGHTS I SPENT WITH HER ARE CLEARER THAN ALL THE OTHERS.


MONSIEUR DUBOIS?



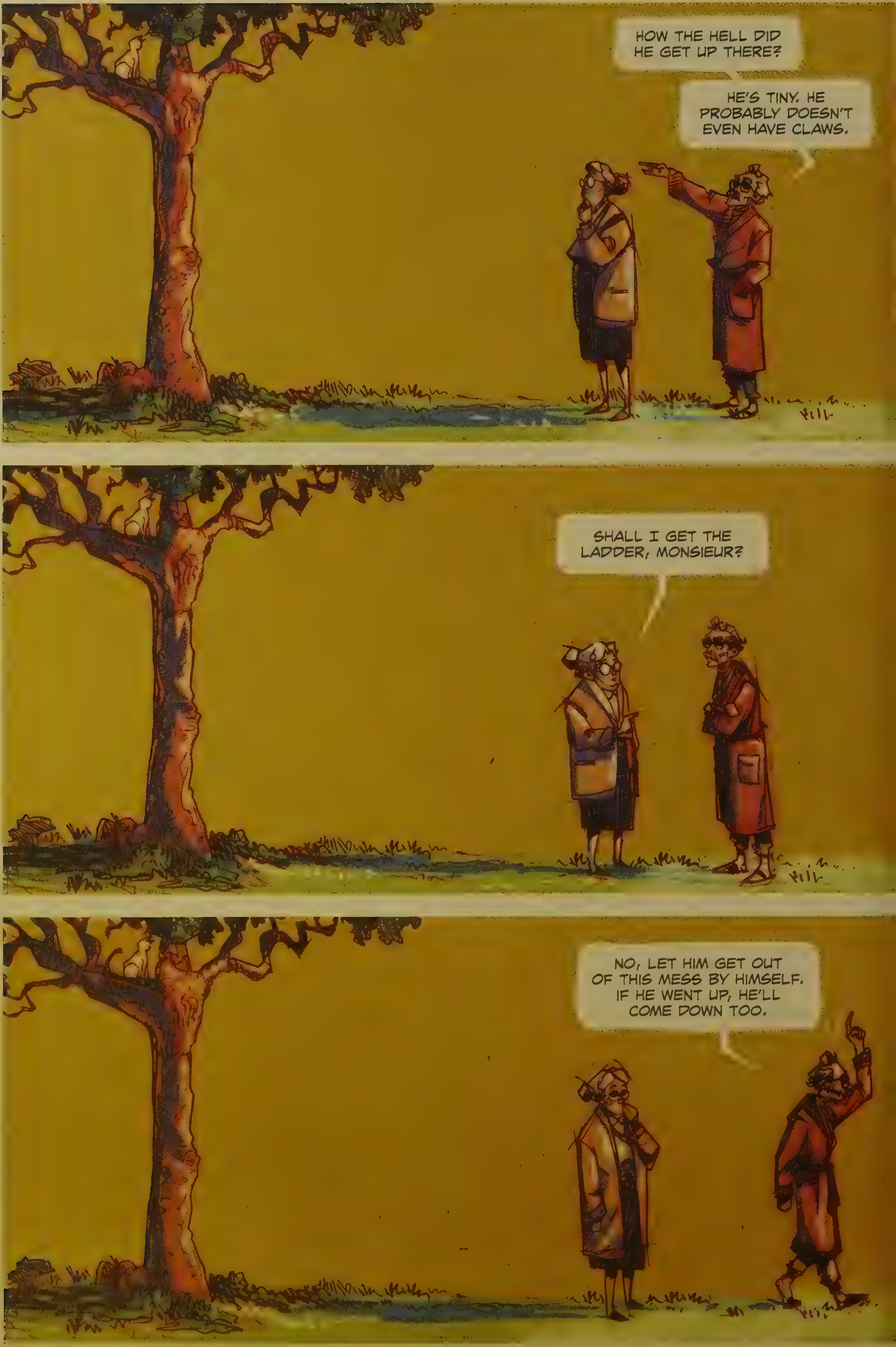

BRAVO!
I'M SORRY, MAESTRO. HOW EMBARRASSING!
NOT AT ALL, MISS ADELINE. THIS OLD PIANO NEVER SOUNDED SO GOOD.
PLEASE FORGIVE ME. THE PIANO...
...SEEMED TO BE CALLING OUT FOR ME.

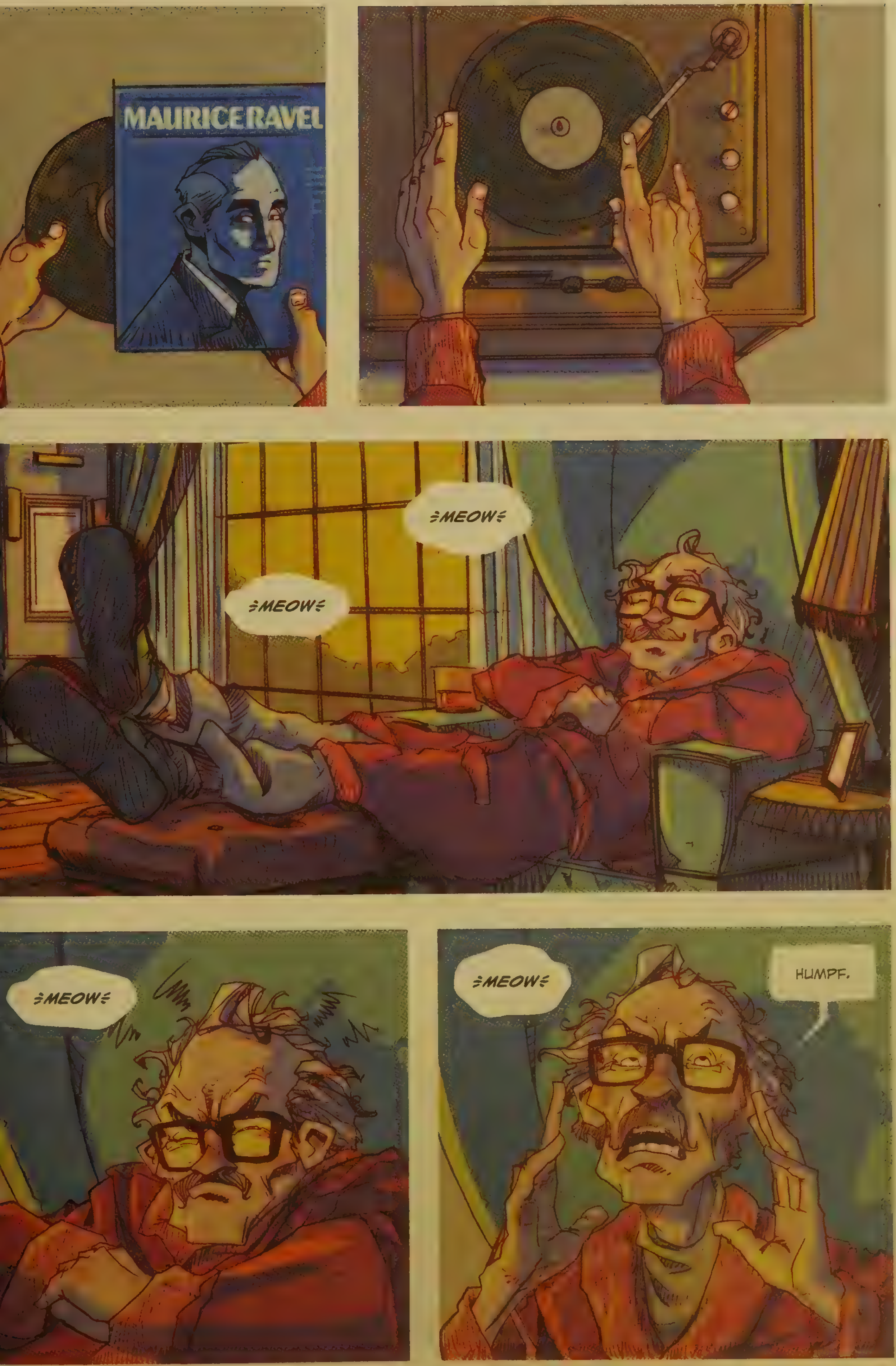

WELL, MAYBE IT WAS. HAVE YOU SEEN THIS, MAURICE?
WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT WE HAD A GREAT PIANIST AT HOME?
MEOW
OH, NOT AT ALL, MONSIEUR. I'VE ALWAYS LOVED MUSIC... AND I JUST DID MY BEST TRYING TO LEARN ON MY OWN.
YES, WELL. I'M GLAD YOU DID. MAURICE LOVED IT...
AND SO DID I.
AND NOW... IT'S TIME TO GROOM THIS POOR BASTARD.

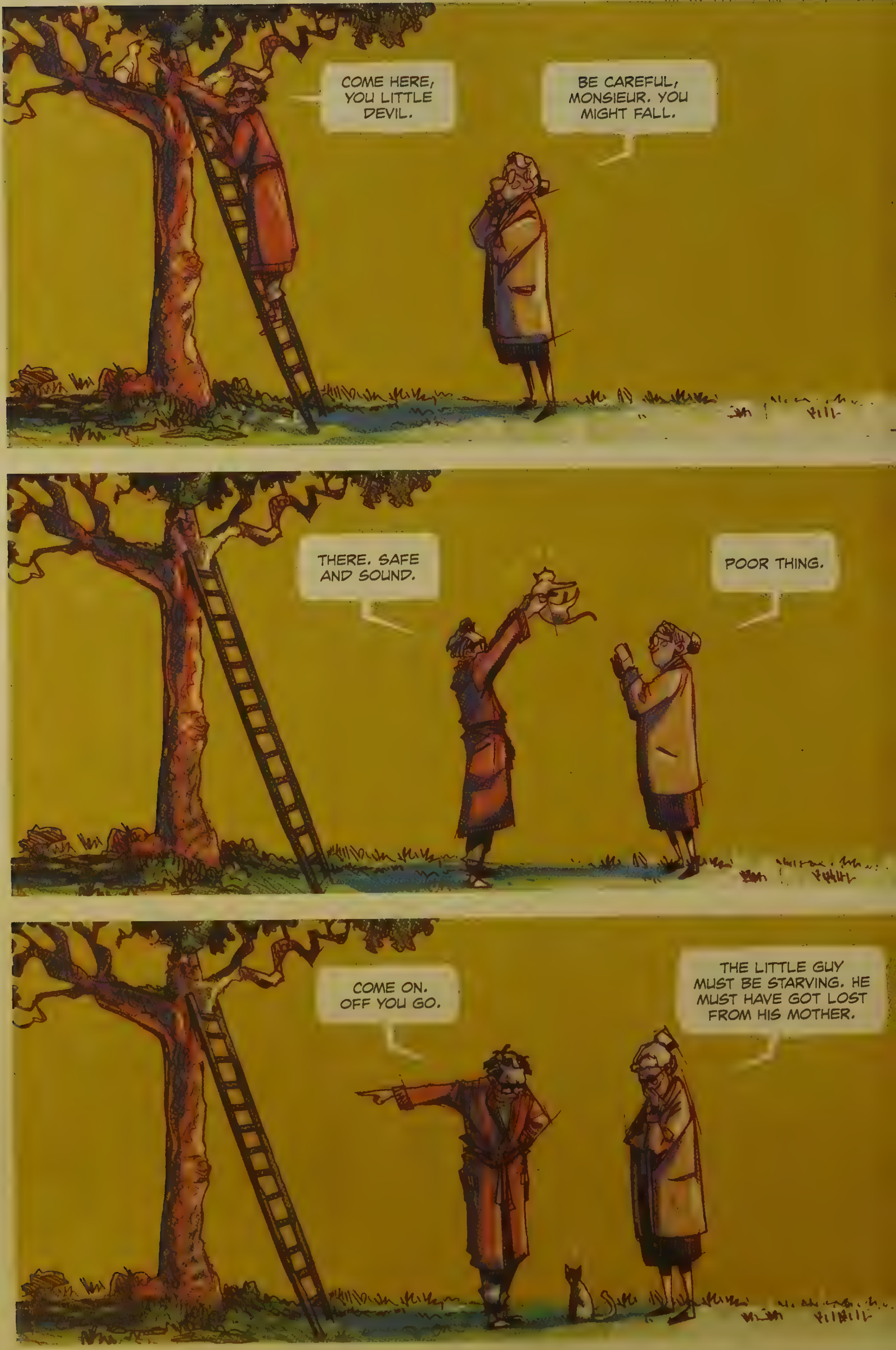

HE'S OLD. LIKE HIS OWNER.
WHAT ABOUT YOU, MAURICE?
HOW DID YOU END UP HERE?

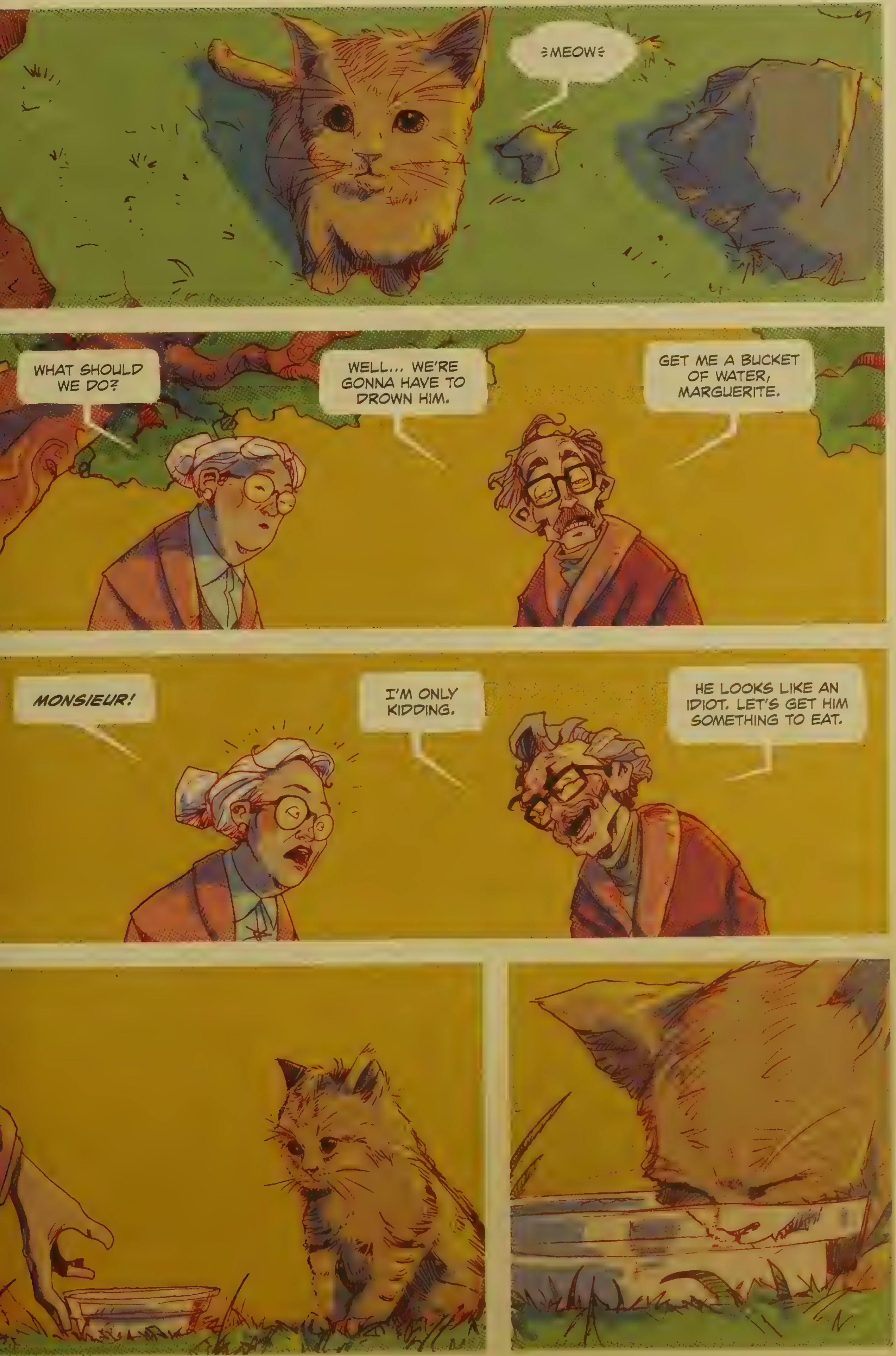
III

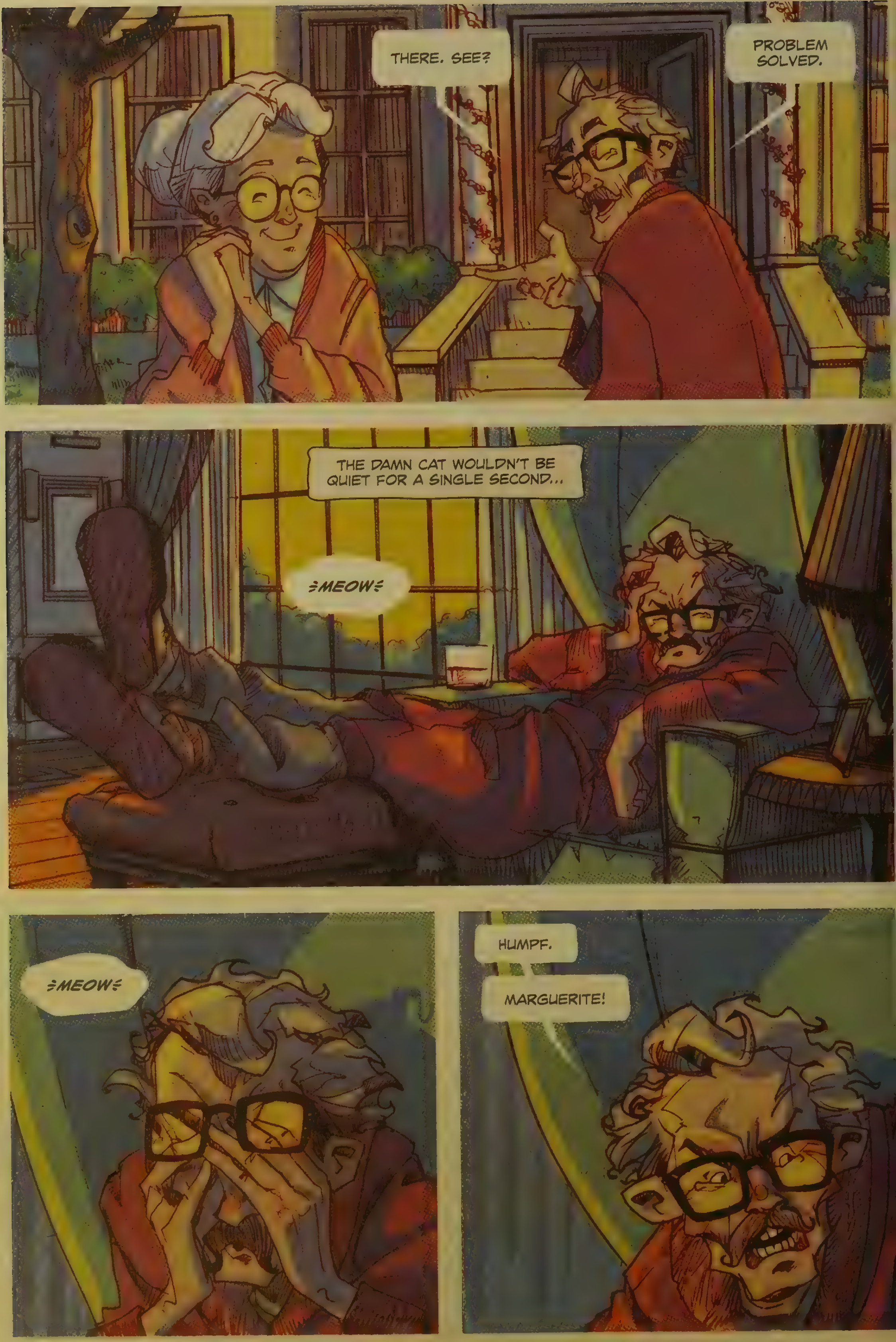
Maurice

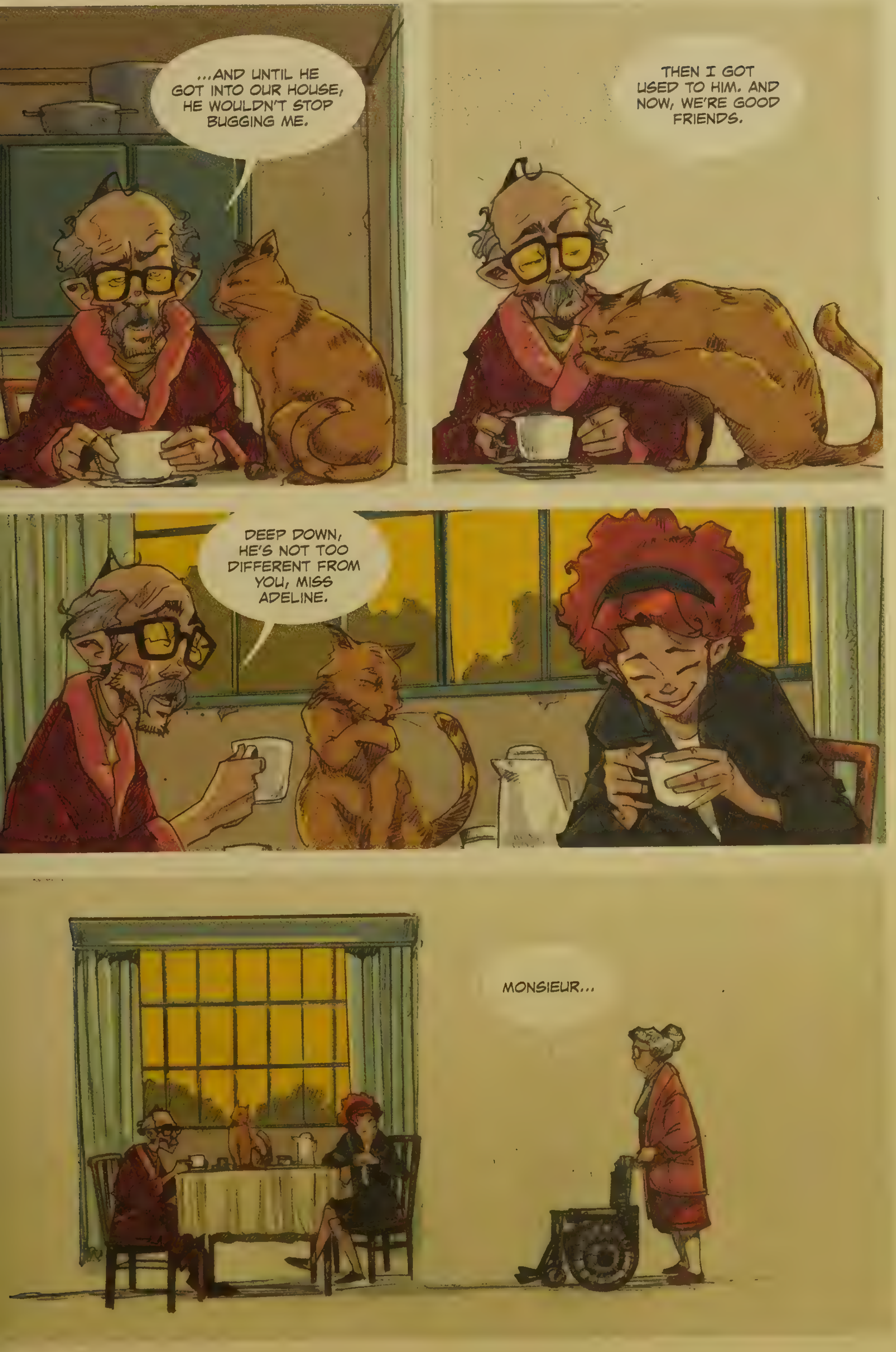

HOW THE HELL DID HE GET UP THERE?
HE'S TINY. HE PROBABLY DOESN'T EVEN HAVE CLAWS.
SHALL I GET THE LADDER, MONSIEUR?
NO, LET HIM GET OUT OF THIS MESS BY HIMSELF. IF HE WENT UP, HE'LL COME DOWN TOO.

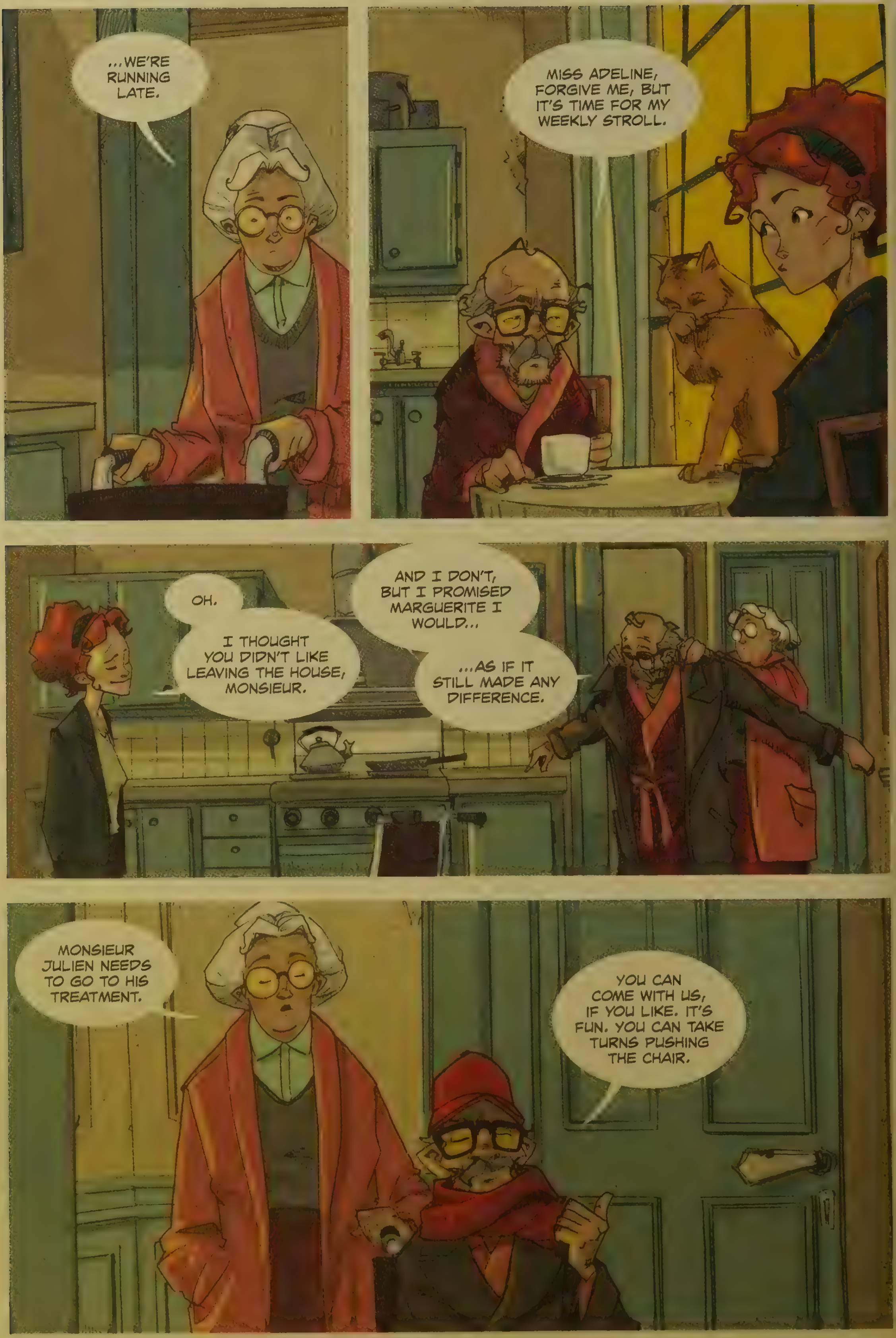

MAURICE RAVEL
MEOW
MEOW
MEOW
MEOW
HUMPF.

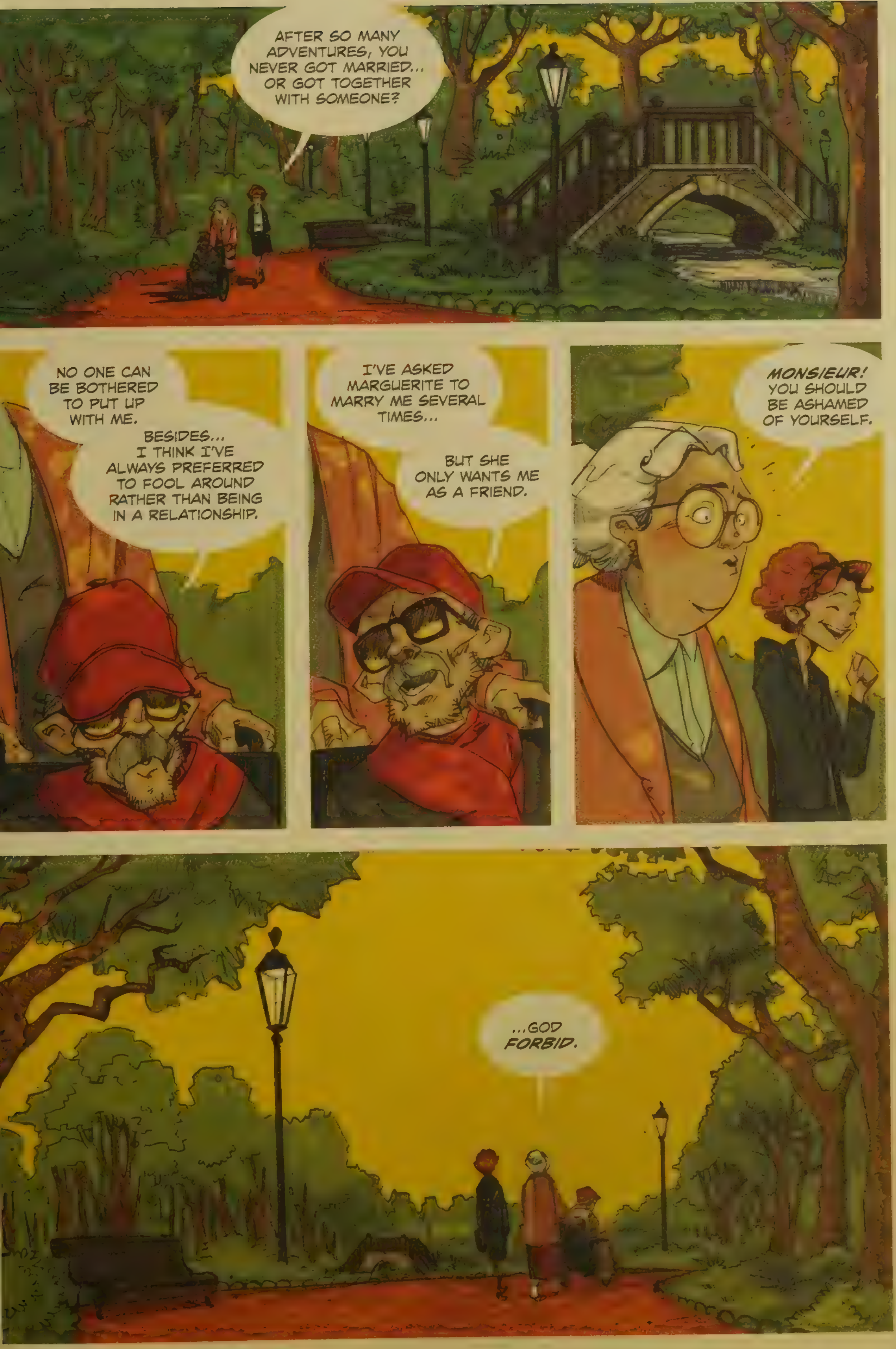

COME HERE, YOU LITTLE DEVIL.
BE CAREFUL, MONSIEUR. YOU MIGHT FALL.
THERE. SAFE AND SOUND.
POOR THING.
COME ON. OFF YOU GO.
THE LITTLE GUY MUST BE STARVING. HE MUST HAVE GOT LOST FROM HIS MOTHER.

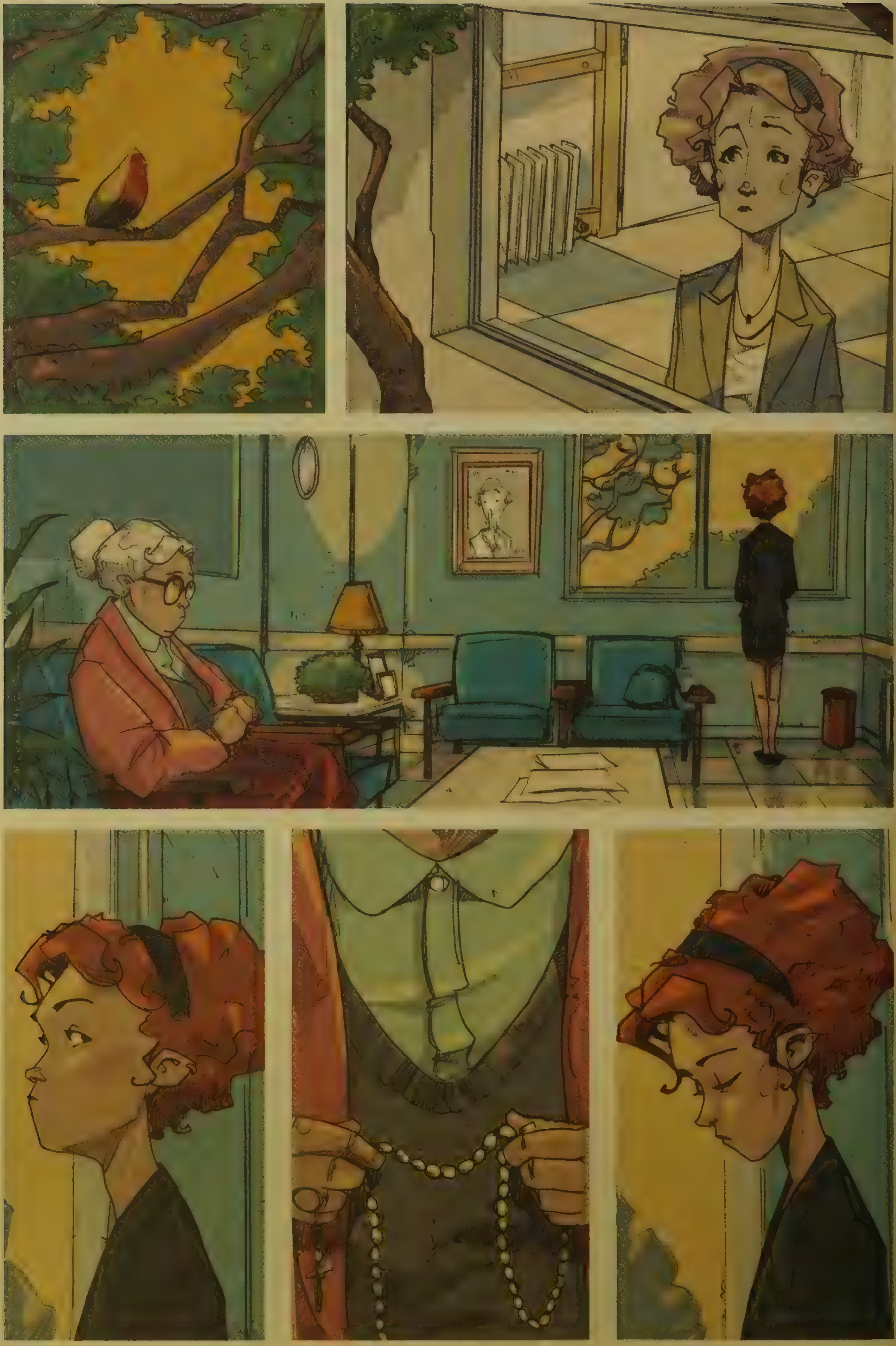

MEOW
WHAT SHOULD WE DO?
WELL... WE'RE GONNA HAVE TO DROWN HIM.
GET ME A BUCKET OF WATER, MARGUERITE.
MONSIEUR!
I'M ONLY KIDDING.
HE LOOKS LIKE AN IDIOT. LET'S GET HIM SOMETHING TO EAT.

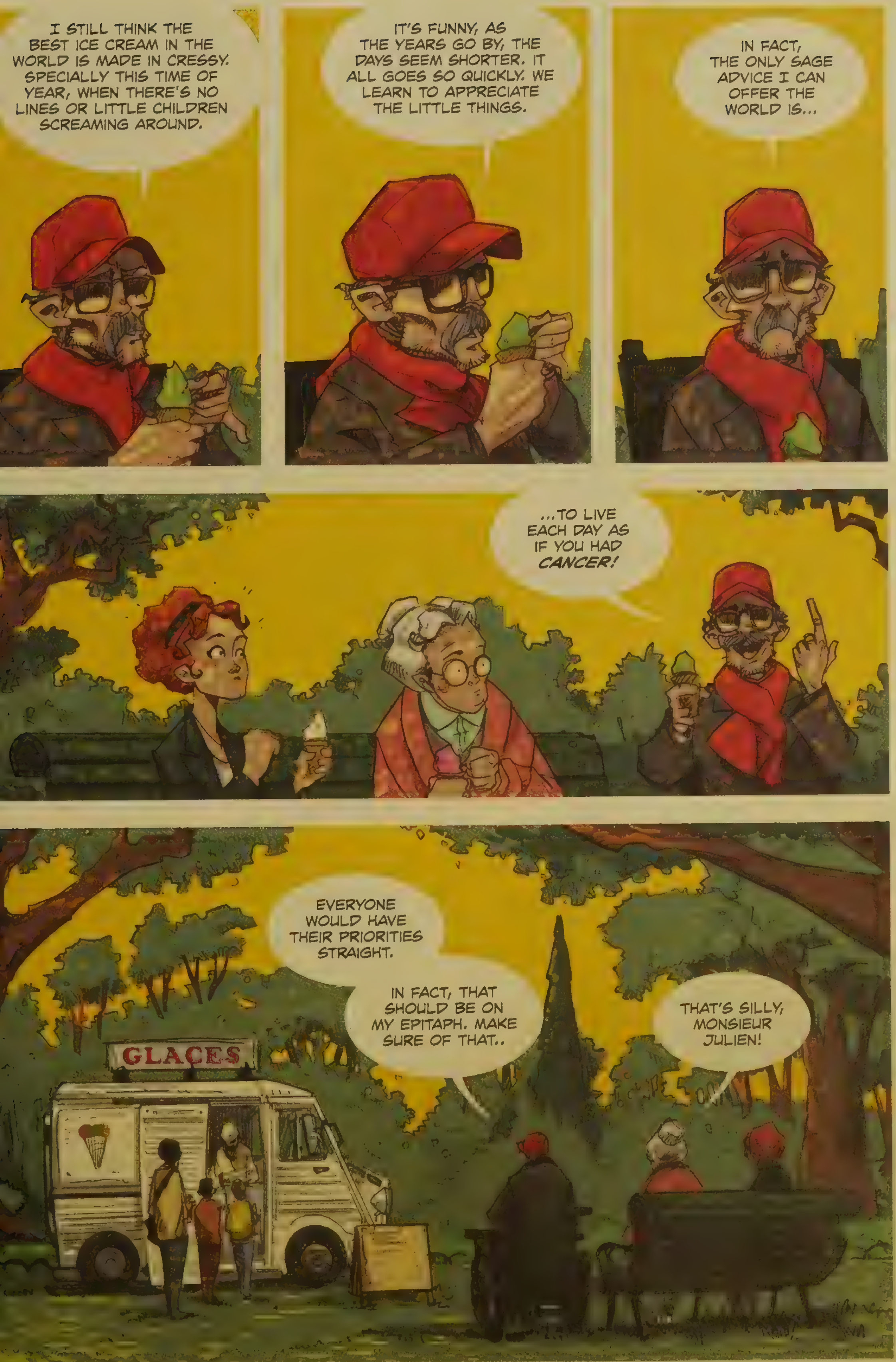

THERE. SEE?
PROBLEM SOLVED.
THE DAMN CAT WOULDN'T BE QUIET FOR A SINGLE SECOND...
≑MEOW≑
≑MEOW≑
HUMPF.
MARGUERITE!

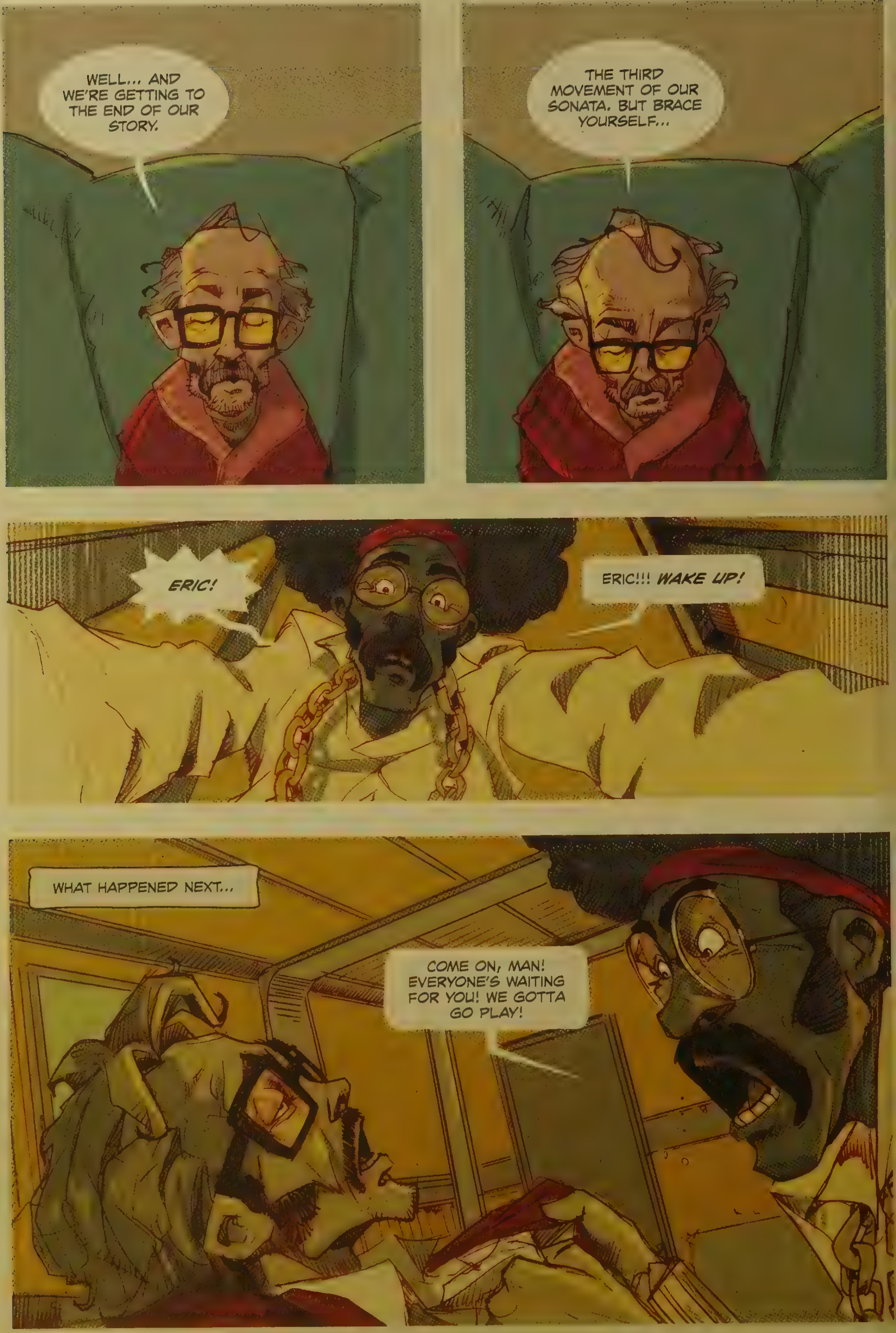

...AND UNTIL HE GOT INTO OUR HOUSE, HE WOULDN'T STOP BUGGING ME.
THEN I GOT USED TO HIM. AND NOW, WE'RE GOOD FRIENDS.
DEEP DOWN, HE'S NOT TOO DIFFERENT FROM YOU, MISS ADELINE.
MONSIEUR...

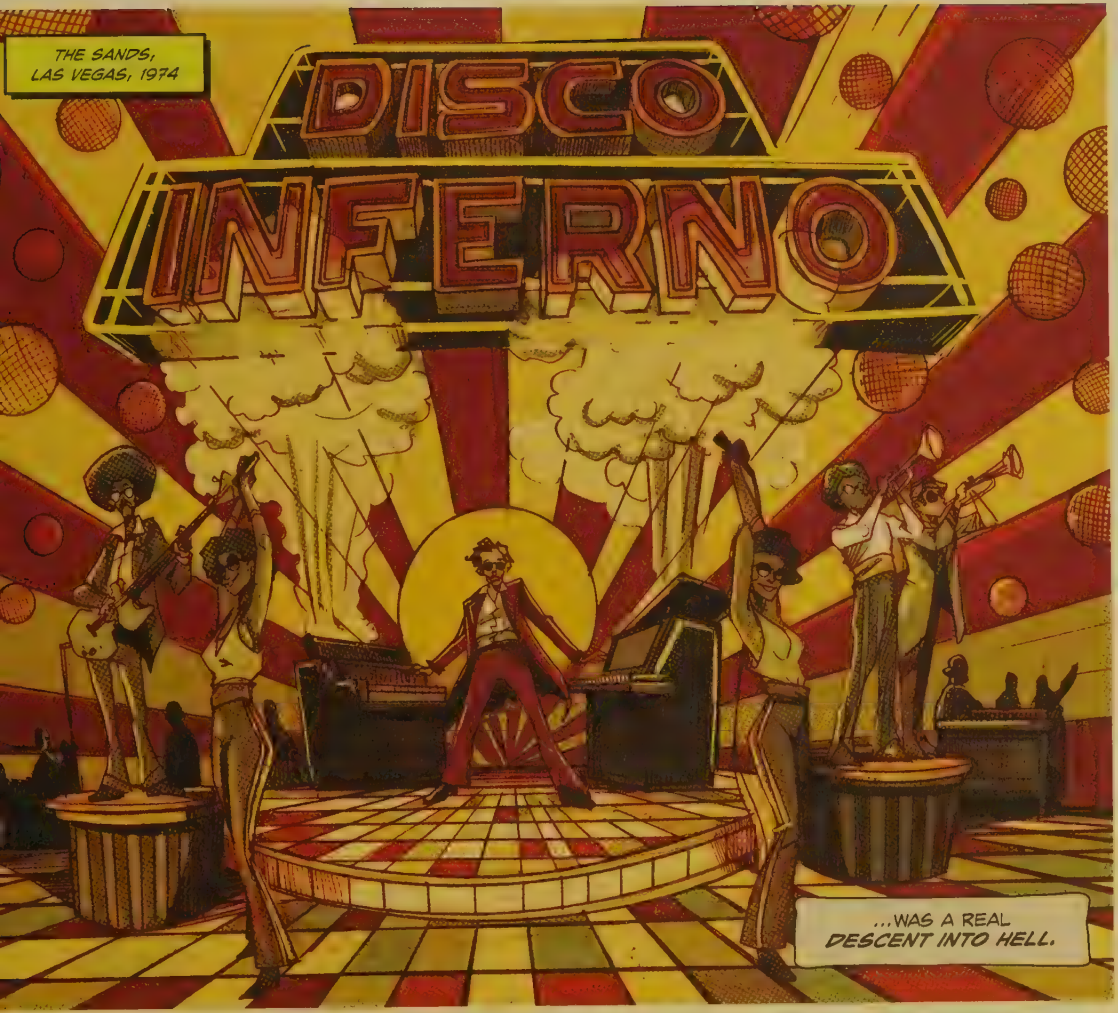

...WE'RE RUNNING LATE.
MISS ADELINE, FORGIVE ME, BUT IT'S TIME FOR MY WEEKLY STROLL.
OH.
I THOUGHT YOU DIDN'T LIKE LEAVING THE HOUSE, MONSIEUR.
AND I DON'T, BUT I PROMISED MARGUERITE I WOULD...
...AS IF IT STILL MADE ANY DIFFERENCE.
MONSIEUR JULIEN NEEDS TO GO TO HIS TREATMENT.
YOU CAN COME WITH US, IF YOU LIKE. IT'S FUN. YOU CAN TAKE TURNS PUSHING THE CHAIR.

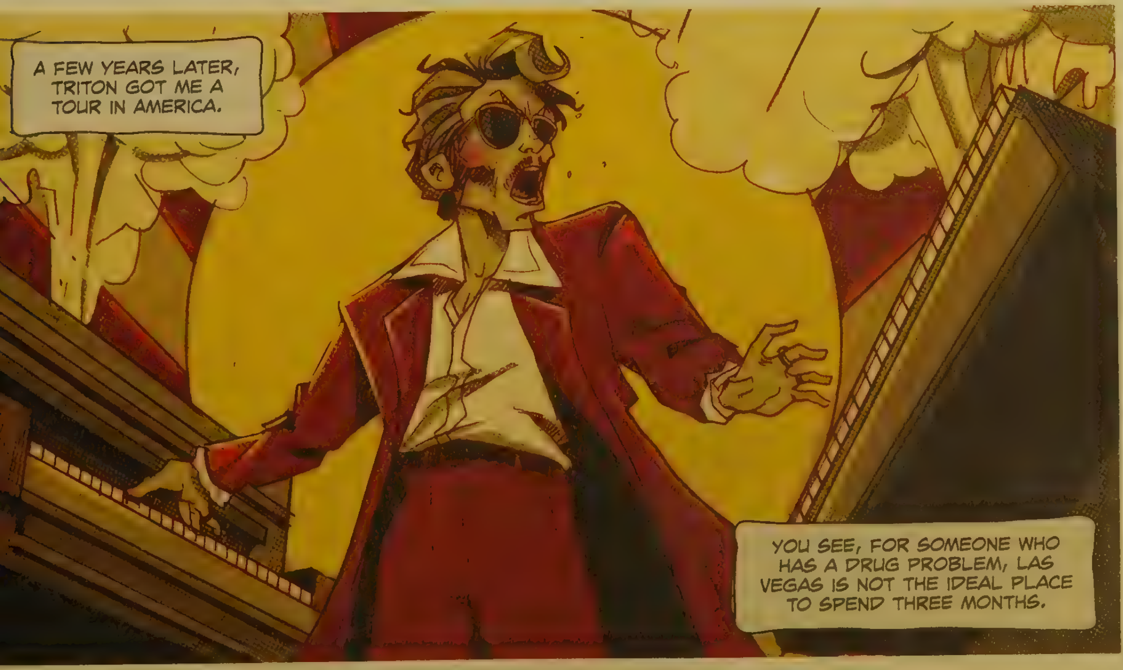

AFTER SO MANY ADVENTURES, YOU NEVER GOT MARRIED... OR GOT TOGETHER WITH SOMEONE?
NO ONE CAN BE BOTHERED TO PUT UP WITH ME.
BESIDES... I THINK I'VE ALWAYS PREFERRED TO FOOL AROUND RATHER THAN BEING IN A RELATIONSHIP.
I'VE ASKED MARGUERITE TO MARRY ME SEVERAL TIMES...
BUT SHE ONLY WANTS ME AS A FRIEND.
MONSIEUR! YOU SHOULD BE ASHAMED OF YOURSELF.
...GOD *FORBID*.

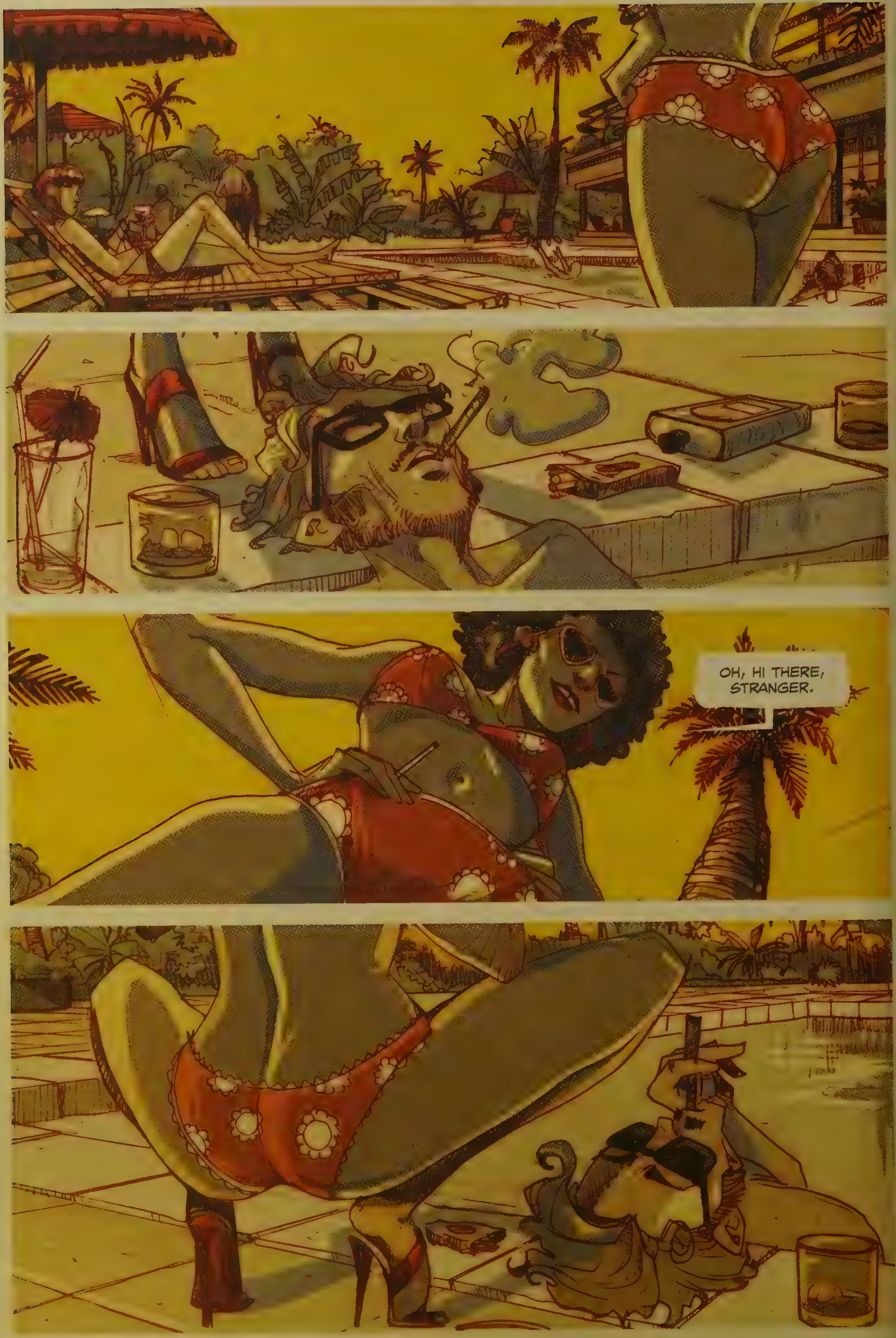


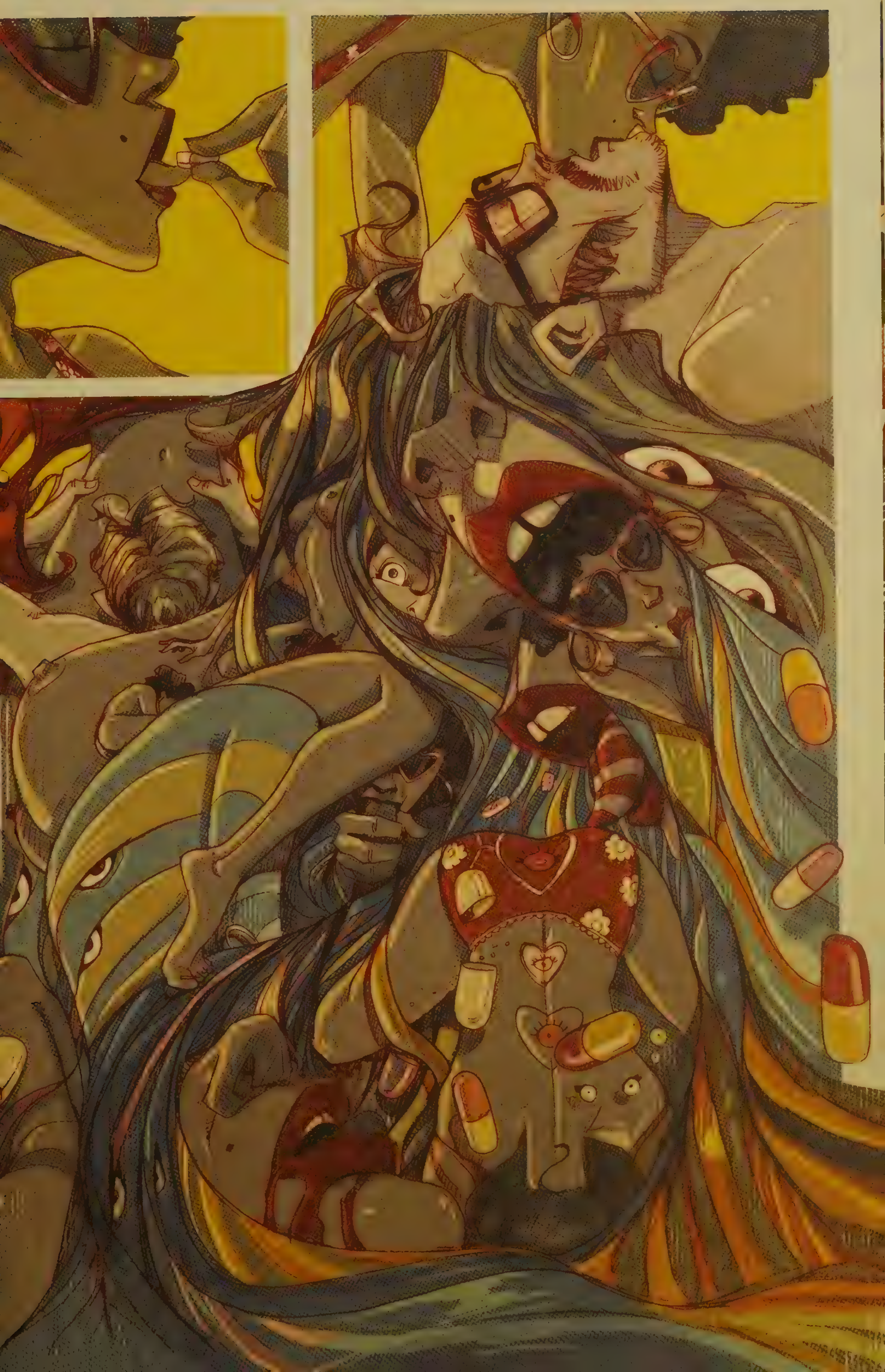

I STILL THINK THE BEST ICE CREAM IN THE WORLD IS MADE IN CRESSY. SPECIALLY THIS TIME OF YEAR, WHEN THERE'S NO LINES OR LITTLE CHILDREN SCREAMING AROUND.
IT'S FUNNY, AS THE YEARS GO BY, THE DAYS SEEM SHORTER. IT ALL GOES SO QUICKLY. WE LEARN TO APPRECIATE THE LITTLE THINGS.
IN FACT, THE ONLY SAGE ADVICE I CAN OFFER THE WORLD IS...
...TO LIVE EACH DAY AS IF YOU HAD ***CANCER!***
EVERYONE WOULD HAVE THEIR PRIORITIES STRAIGHT.
IN FACT, THAT SHOULD BE ON MY EPITAPH. MAKE SURE OF THAT..
THAT'S SILLY, MONSIEUR JULIEN!
GLACES

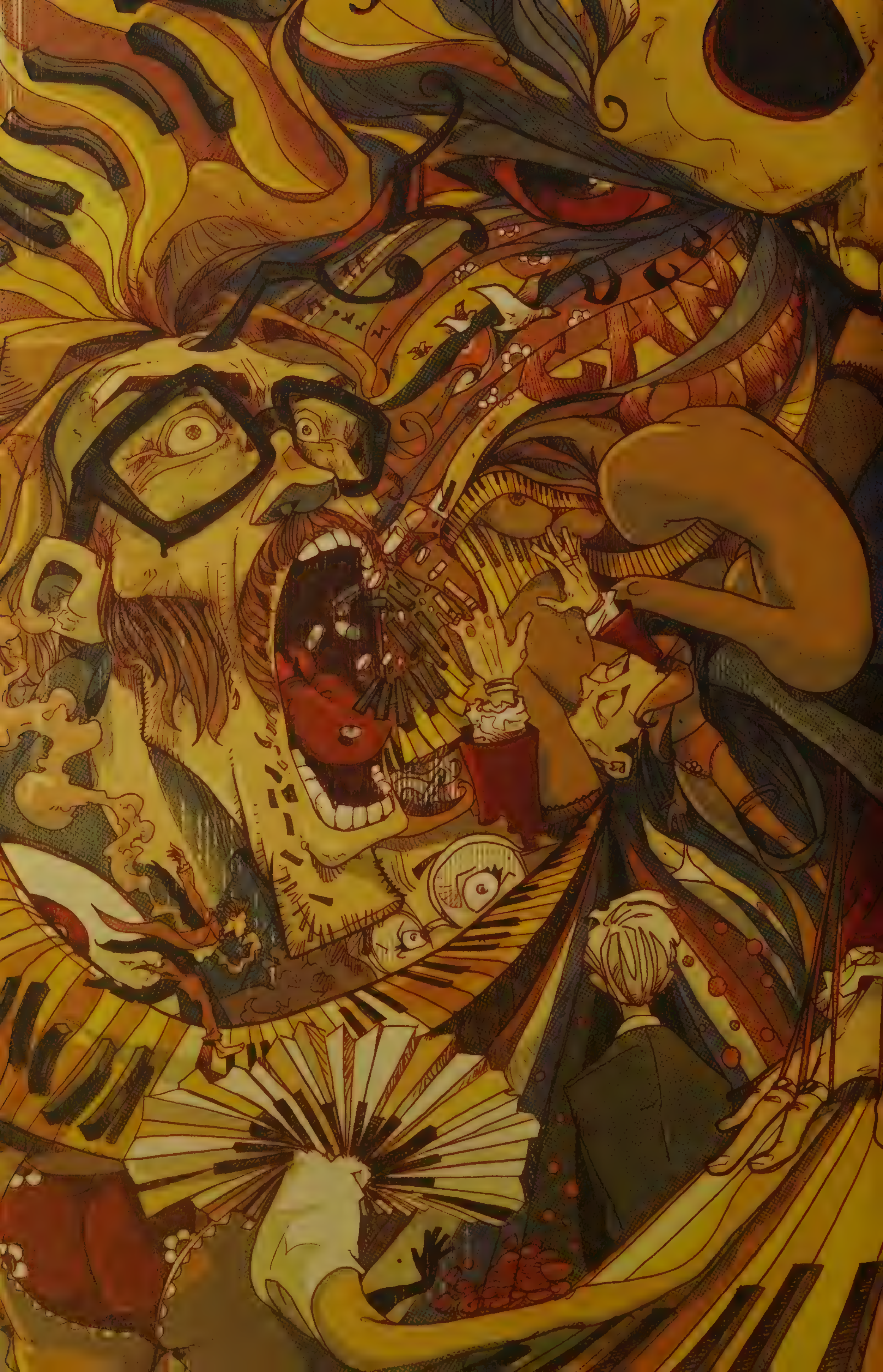

WELL... AND WE'RE GETTING TO THE END OF OUR STORY.
THE THIRD MOVEMENT OF OUR SONATA. BUT BRACE YOURSELF...
ERIC!
ERIC!!! *WAKE UP!*
WHAT HAPPENED NEXT...
COME ON, MAN! EVERYONE'S WAITING FOR YOU! WE GOTTA GO PLAY!

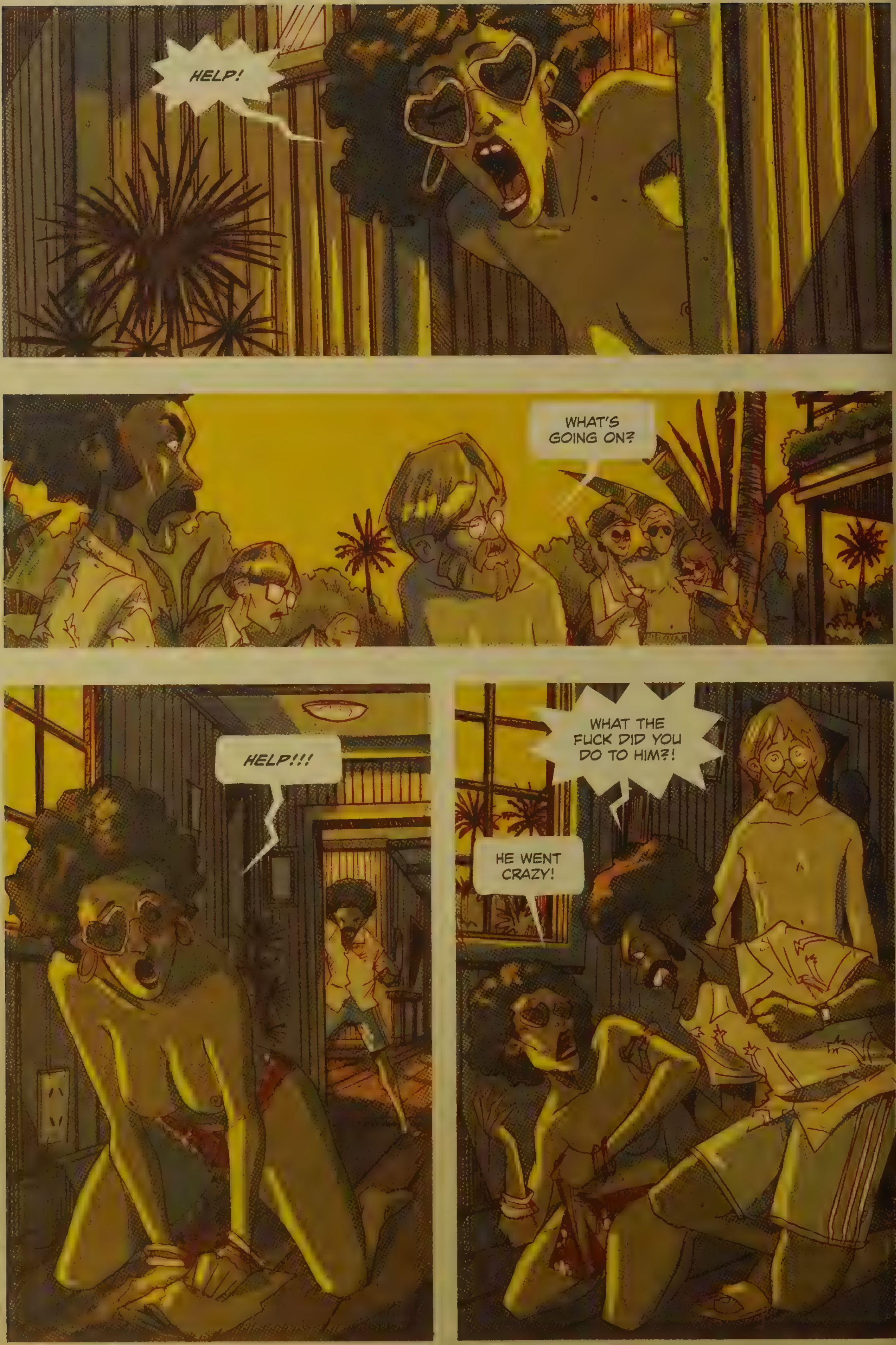

THE SANDS, LAS VEGAS, 1974
DISCO INFERNO
...WAS A REAL *DESCENT INTO HELL.*

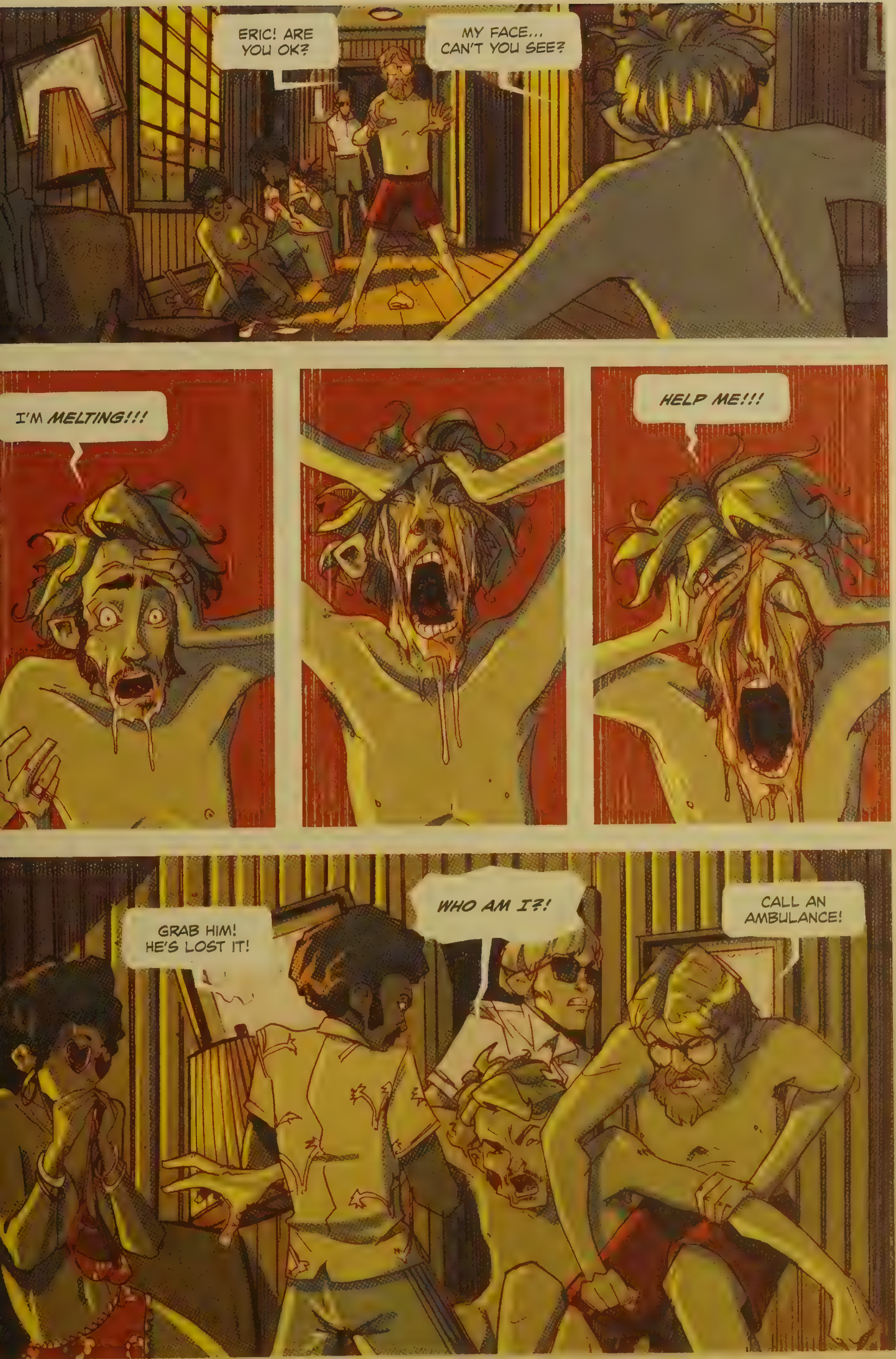

A FEW YEARS LATER, TRITON GOT ME A TOUR IN AMERICA.
YOU SEE, FOR SOMEONE WHO HAS A DRUG PROBLEM, LAS VEGAS IS NOT THE IDEAL PLACE TO SPEND THREE MONTHS.

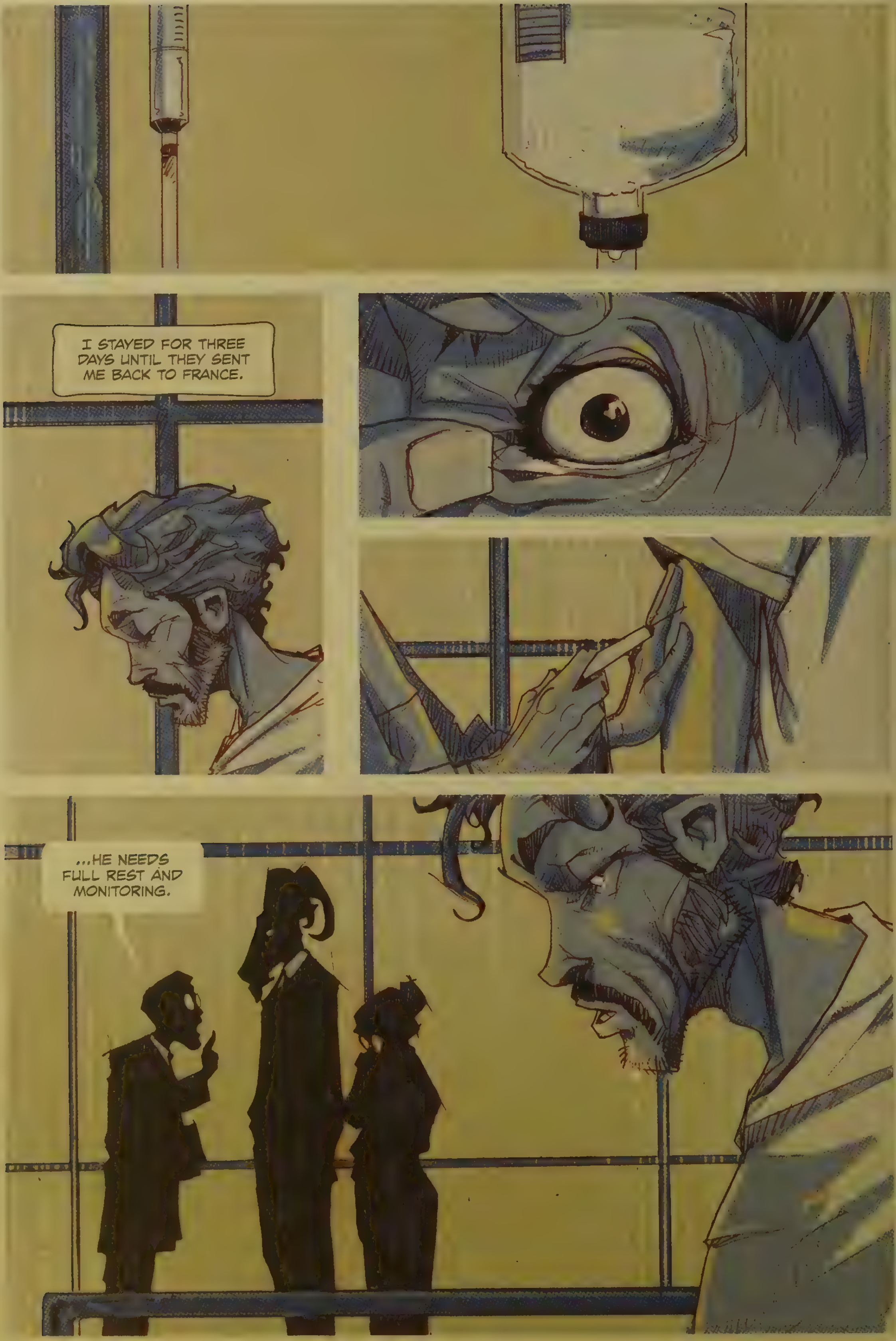

OH, HI THERE, STRANGER.

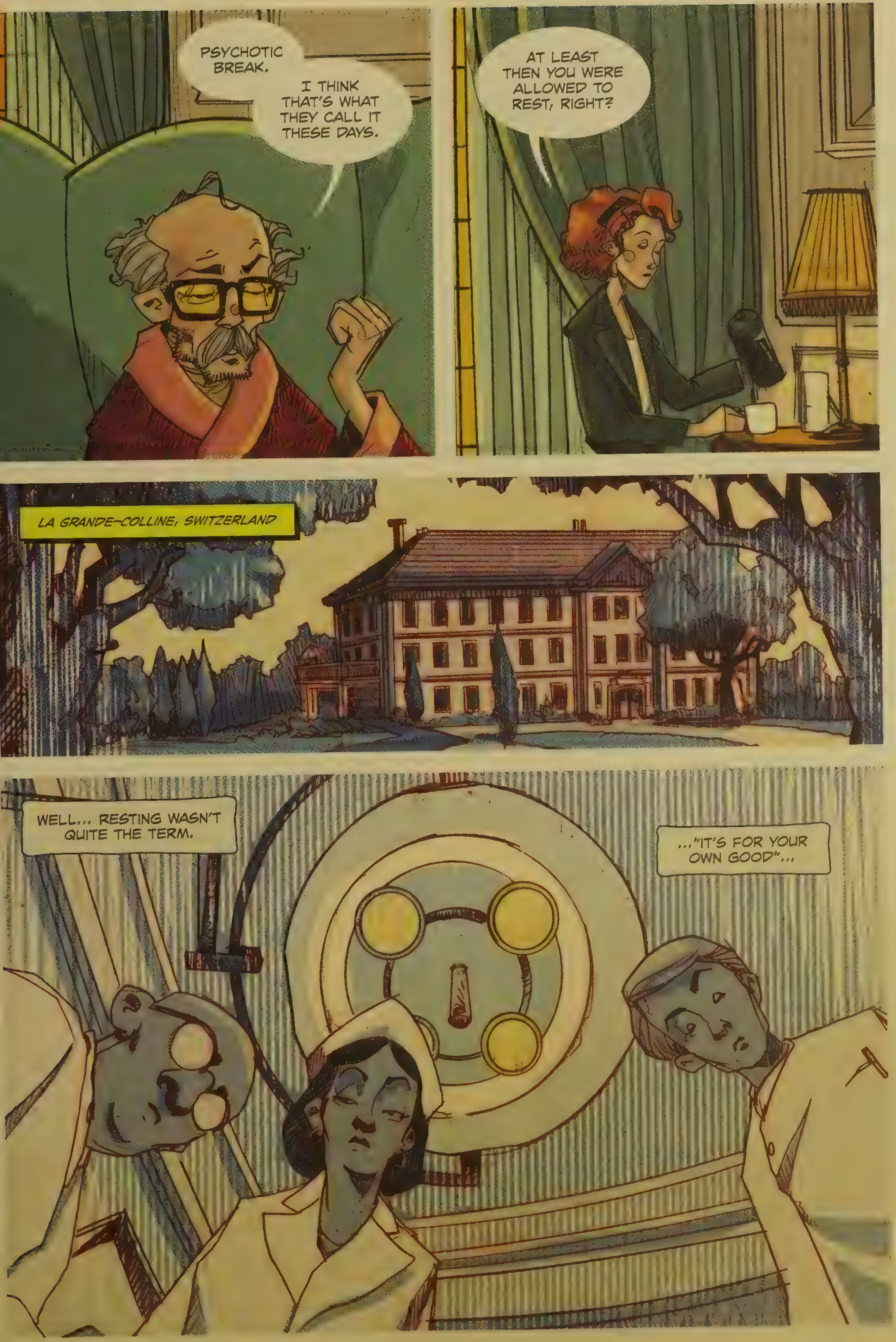


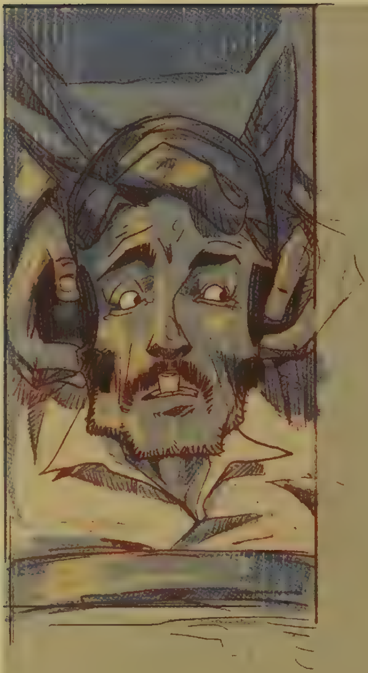



HELP!
WHAT'S GOING ON?
HELP!!!
WHAT THE FUCK DID YOU DO TO HIM?!
HE WENT CRAZY!

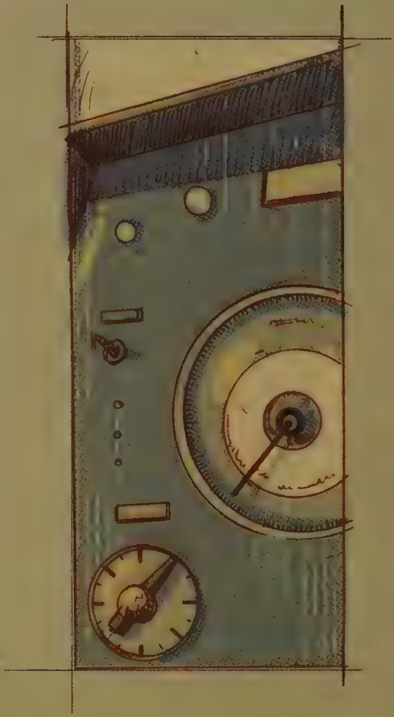

ERIC! ARE YOU OK?
MY FACE... CAN'T YOU SEE?
I'M *MELTING!!!*
HELP ME!!!
GRAB HIM! HE'S LOST IT!
WHO AM I?!
CALL AN AMBULANCE!

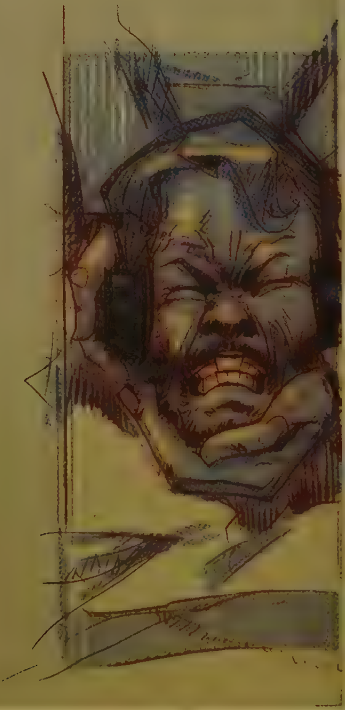

I STAYED FOR THREE DAYS UNTIL THEY SENT ME BACK TO FRANCE.
...HE NEEDS FULL REST AND MONITORING.


PSYCHOTIC BREAK.
I THINK THAT'S WHAT THEY CALL IT THESE DAYS.
AT LEAST THEN YOU WERE ALLOWED TO REST, RIGHT?
LA GRANDE-COLLINE, SWITZERLAND
WELL... RESTING WASN'T QUITE THE TERM.
..."IT'S FOR YOUR OWN GOOD"...

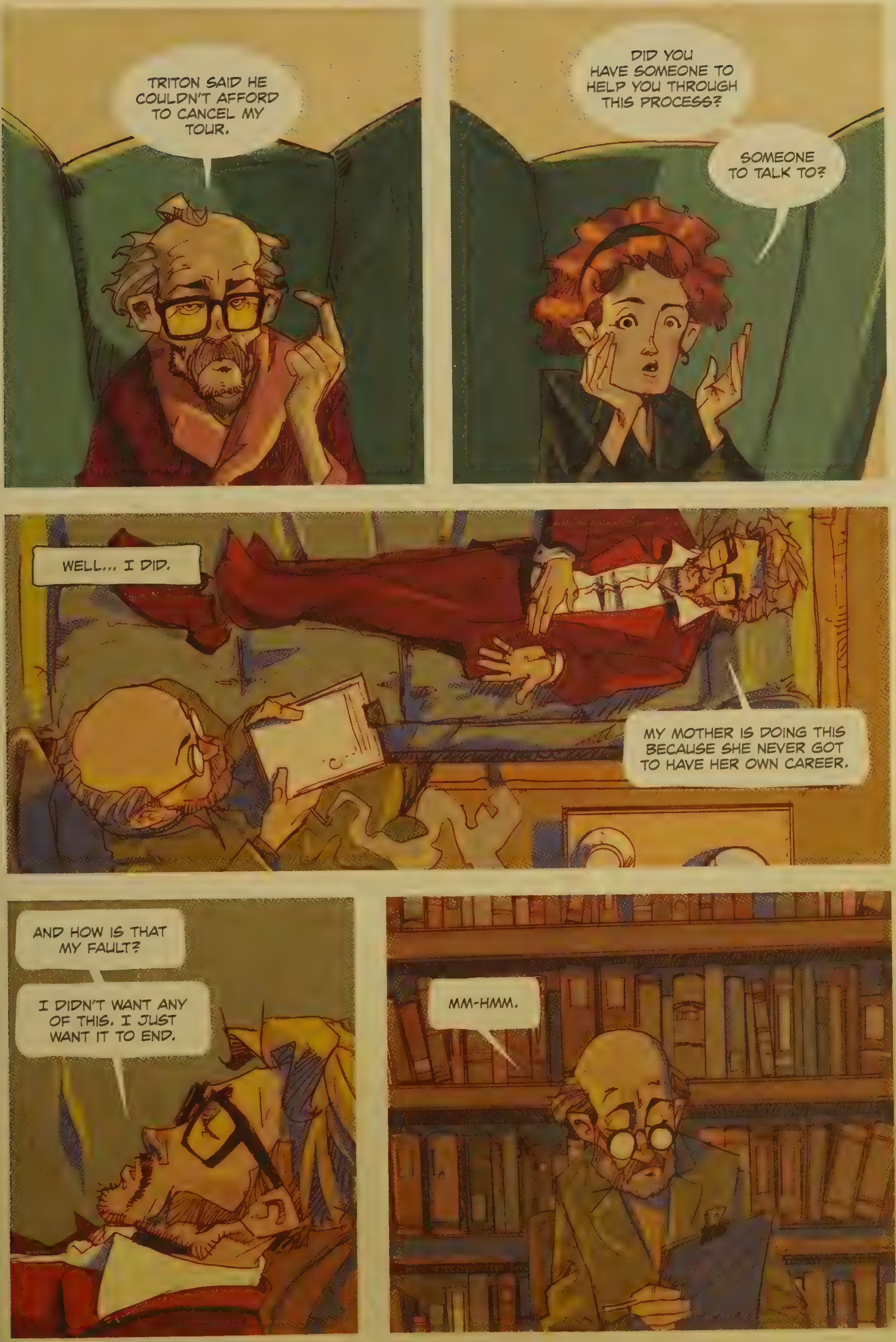


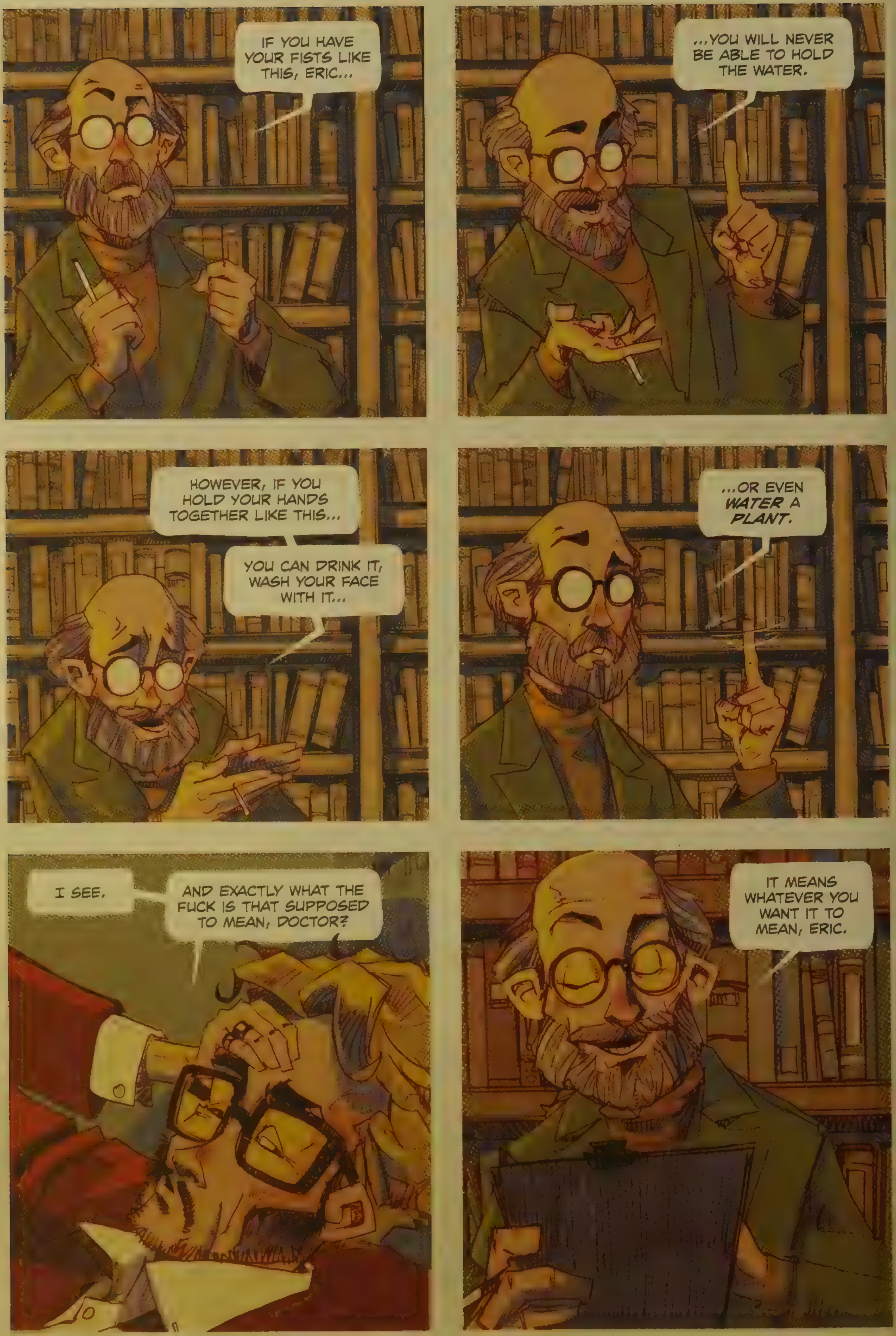
THAT'S WHAT MY MOTHER USED TO SAY TO ME AT THE END OF EVERY SHOCK TREATMENT SESSION.

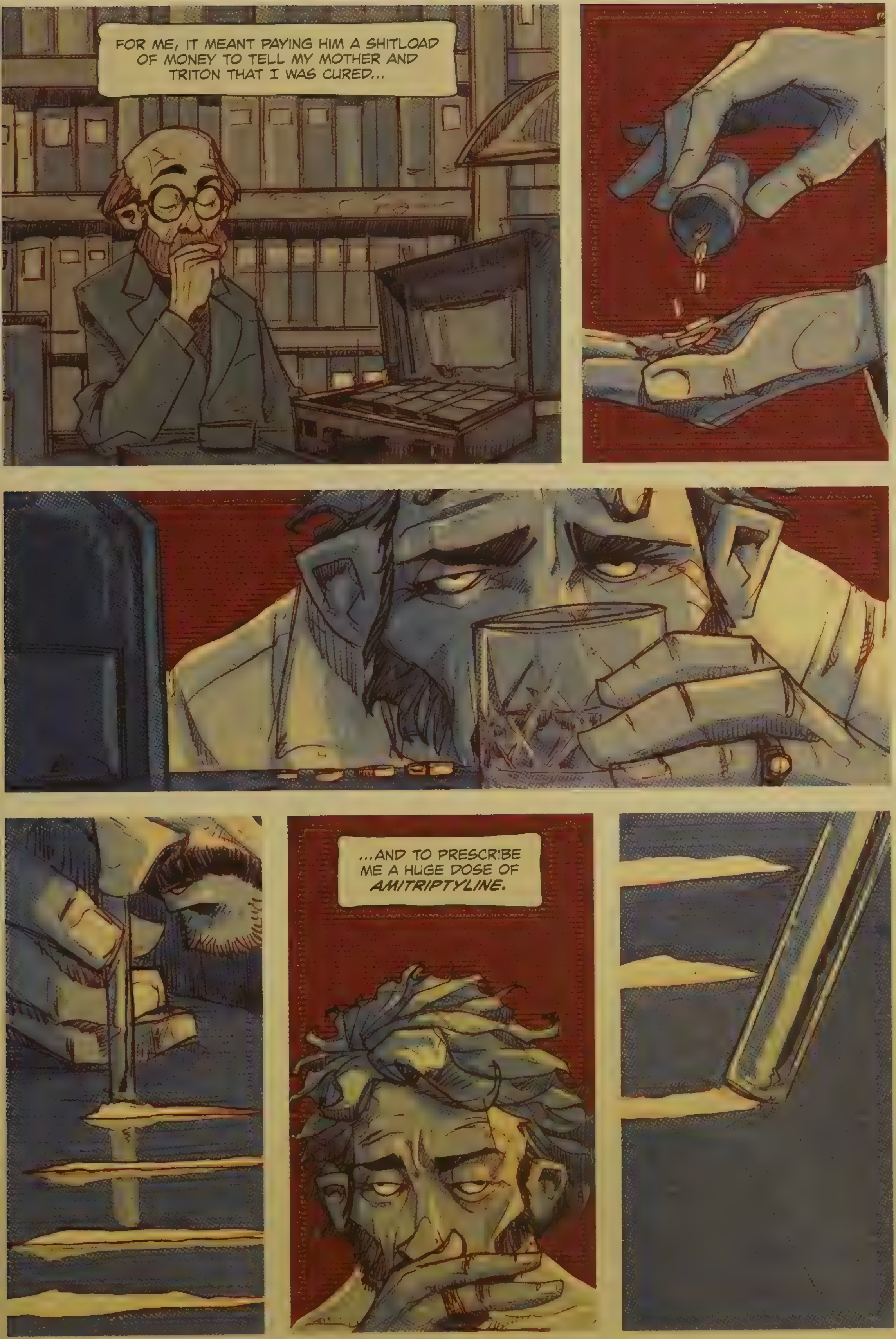


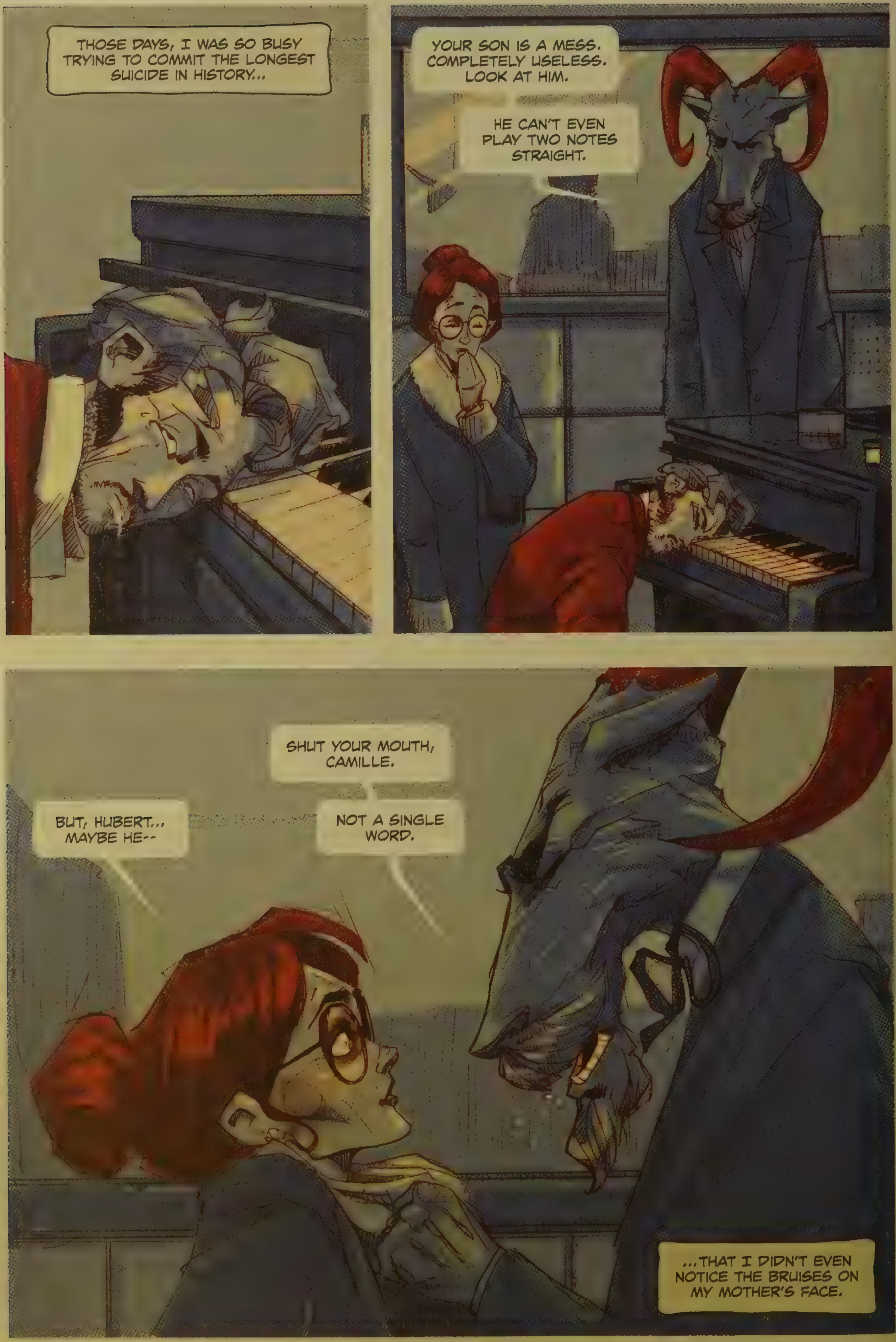


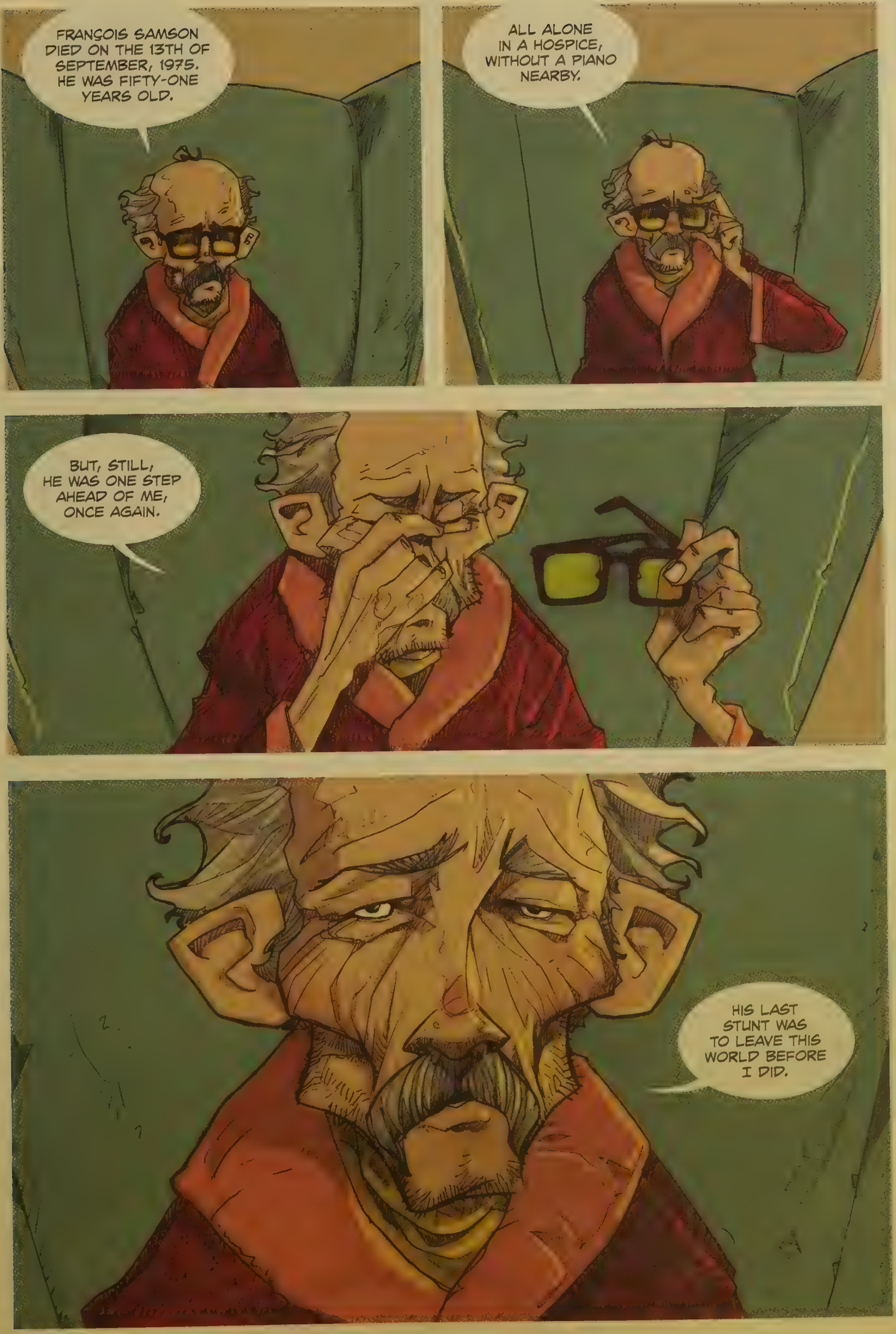
FORTUNATELY, THIS TORTURE DIDN'T LAST LONG.

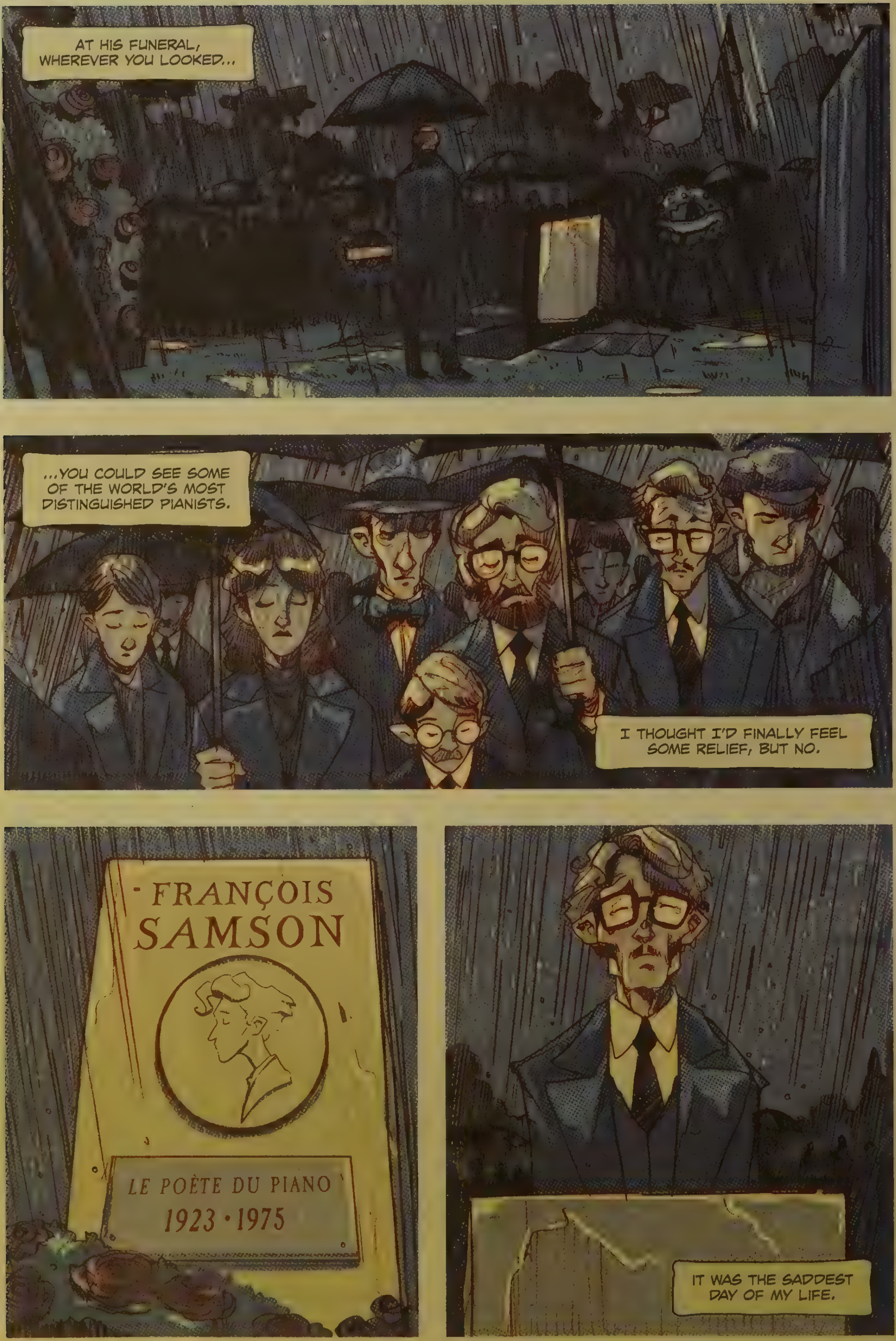

TRITON SAID HE COULDN'T AFFORD TO CANCEL MY TOUR.
DID YOU HAVE SOMEONE TO HELP YOU THROUGH THIS PROCESS?
SOMEONE TO TALK TO?
WELL... I DID.
MY MOTHER IS DOING THIS BECAUSE SHE NEVER GOT TO HAVE HER OWN CAREER.
AND HOW IS THAT MY FAULT?
I DIDN'T WANT ANY OF THIS. I JUST WANT IT TO END.
MM-HMM.

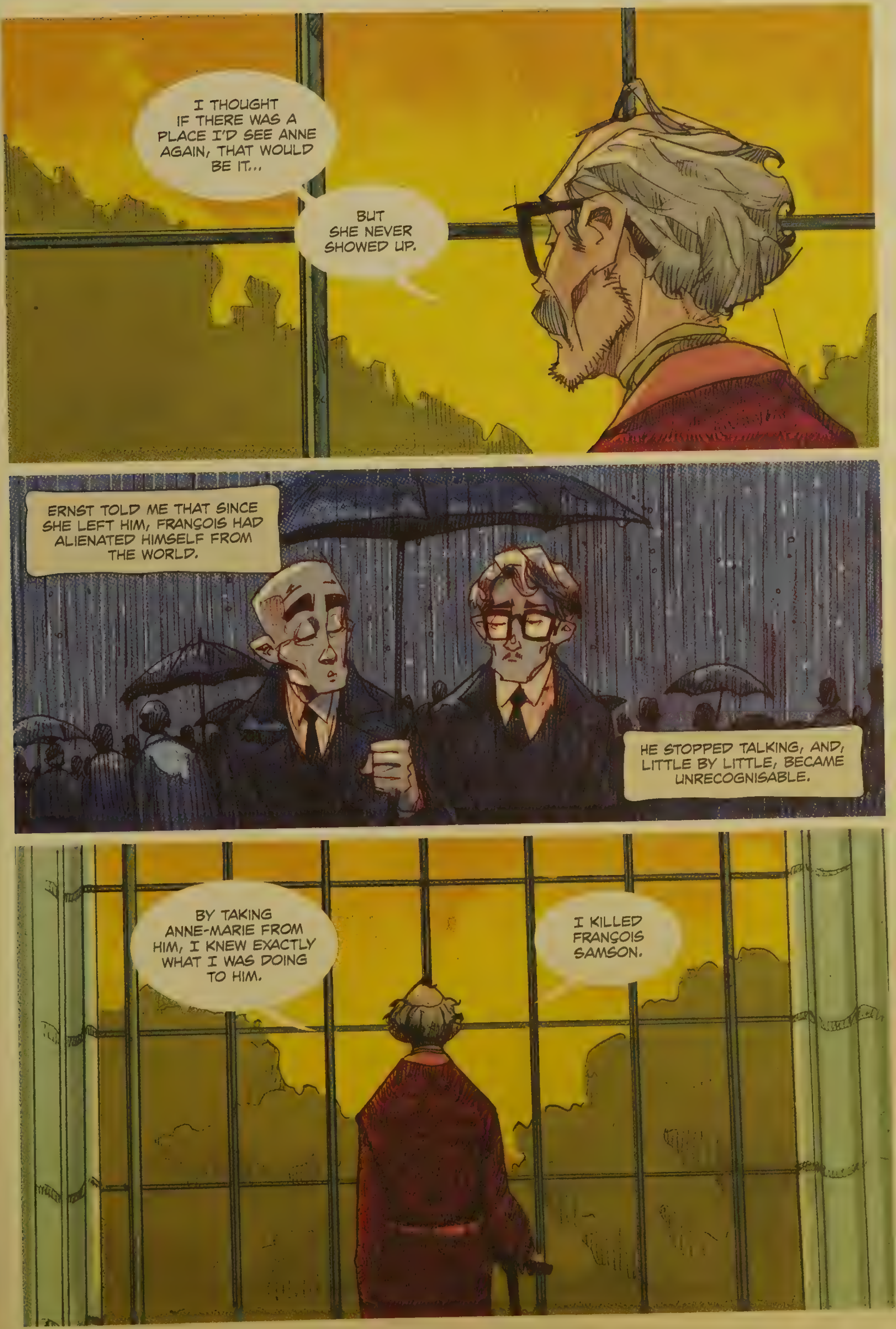

IF YOU HAVE YOUR FISTS LIKE THIS, ERIC...
...YOU WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO HOLD THE WATER.
HOWEVER, IF YOU HOLD YOUR HANDS TOGETHER LIKE THIS...
YOU CAN DRINK IT, WASH YOUR FACE WITH IT...
...OR EVEN ***WATER*** A ***PLANT***.
I SEE.
AND EXACTLY WHAT THE FUCK IS THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN, DOCTOR?
IT MEANS WHATEVER YOU WANT IT TO MEAN, ERIC.

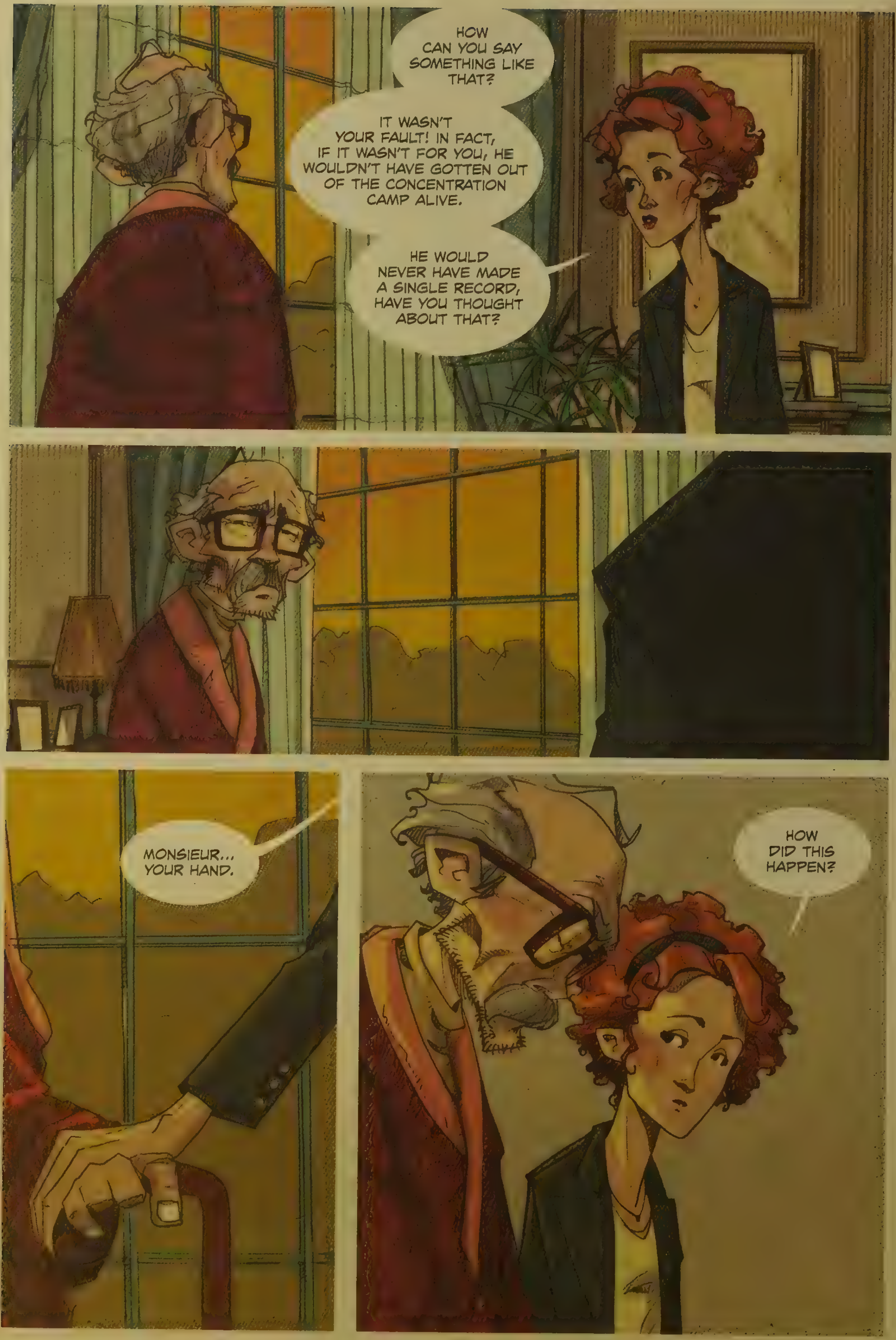

FOR ME, IT MEANT PAYING HIM A SHITLOAD OF MONEY TO TELL MY MOTHER AND TRITON THAT I WAS CURED...
...AND TO PRESCRIBE ME A HUGE DOSE OF *AMITRIPTYLINE.*

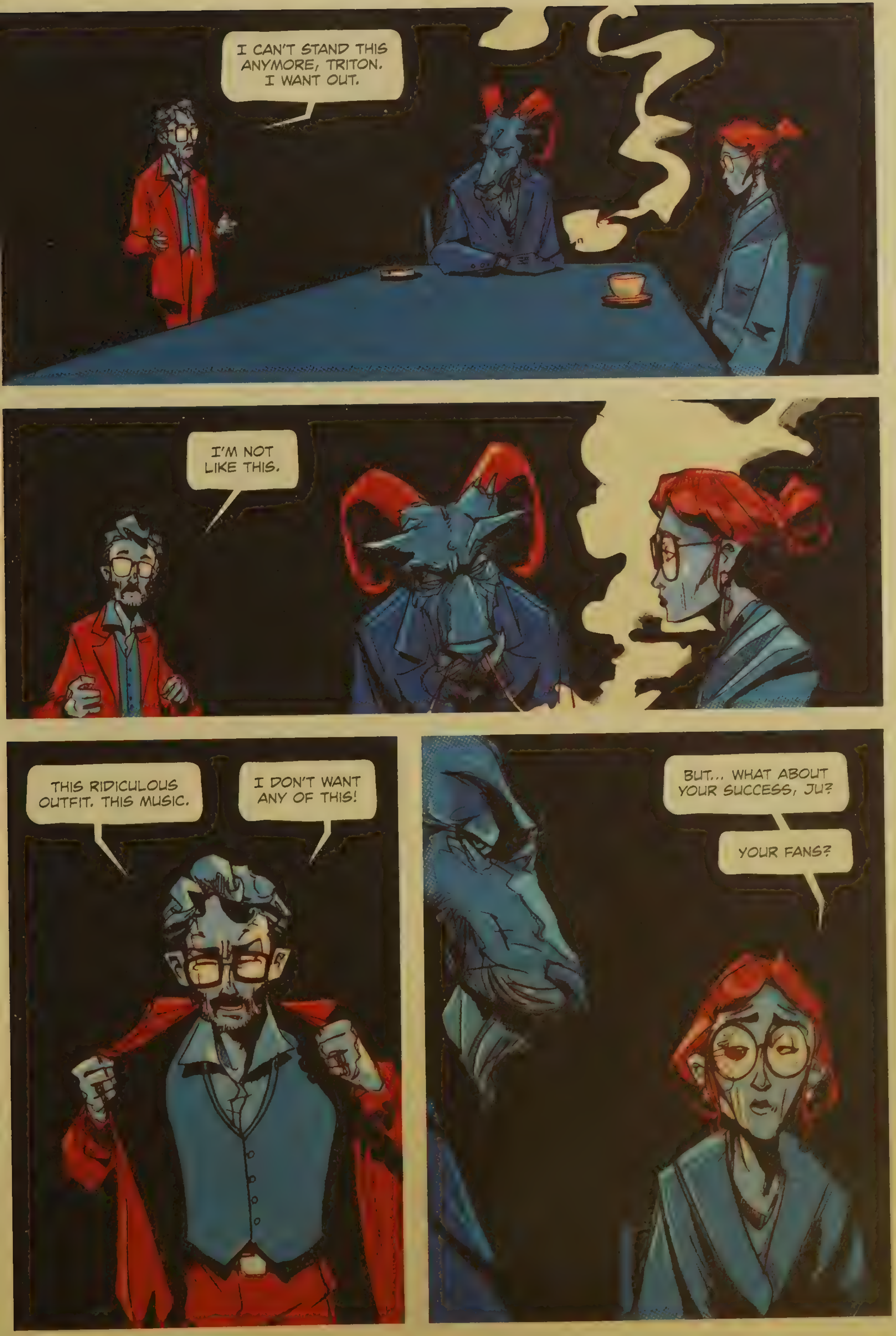

THOSE DAYS, I WAS SO BUSY TRYING TO COMMIT THE LONGEST SUICIDE IN HISTORY...
YOUR SON IS A MESS. COMPLETELY USELESS. LOOK AT HIM.
HE CAN'T EVEN PLAY TWO NOTES STRAIGHT.
BUT, HUBERT... MAYBE HE--
SHUT YOUR MOUTH, CAMILLE.
NOT A SINGLE WORD.
...THAT I DIDN'T EVEN NOTICE THE BRUISES ON MY MOTHER'S FACE.

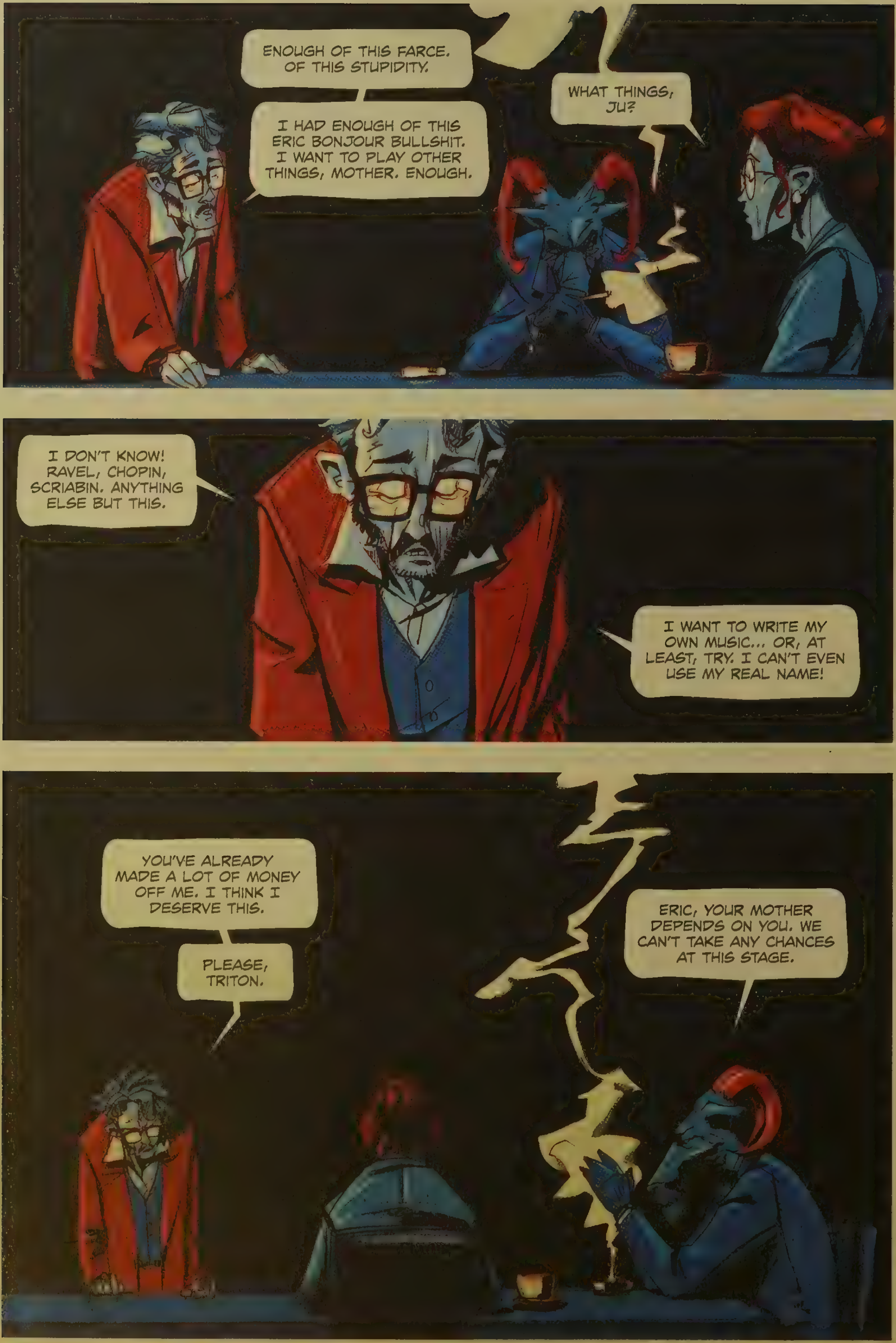

FRANÇOIS SAMSON DIED ON THE 13TH OF SEPTEMBER, 1975. HE WAS FIFTY-ONE YEARS OLD.
ALL ALONE IN A HOSPICE, WITHOUT A PIANO NEARBY.
BUT, STILL, HE WAS ONE STEP AHEAD OF ME, ONCE AGAIN.
HIS LAST STUNT WAS TO LEAVE THIS WORLD BEFORE I DID.

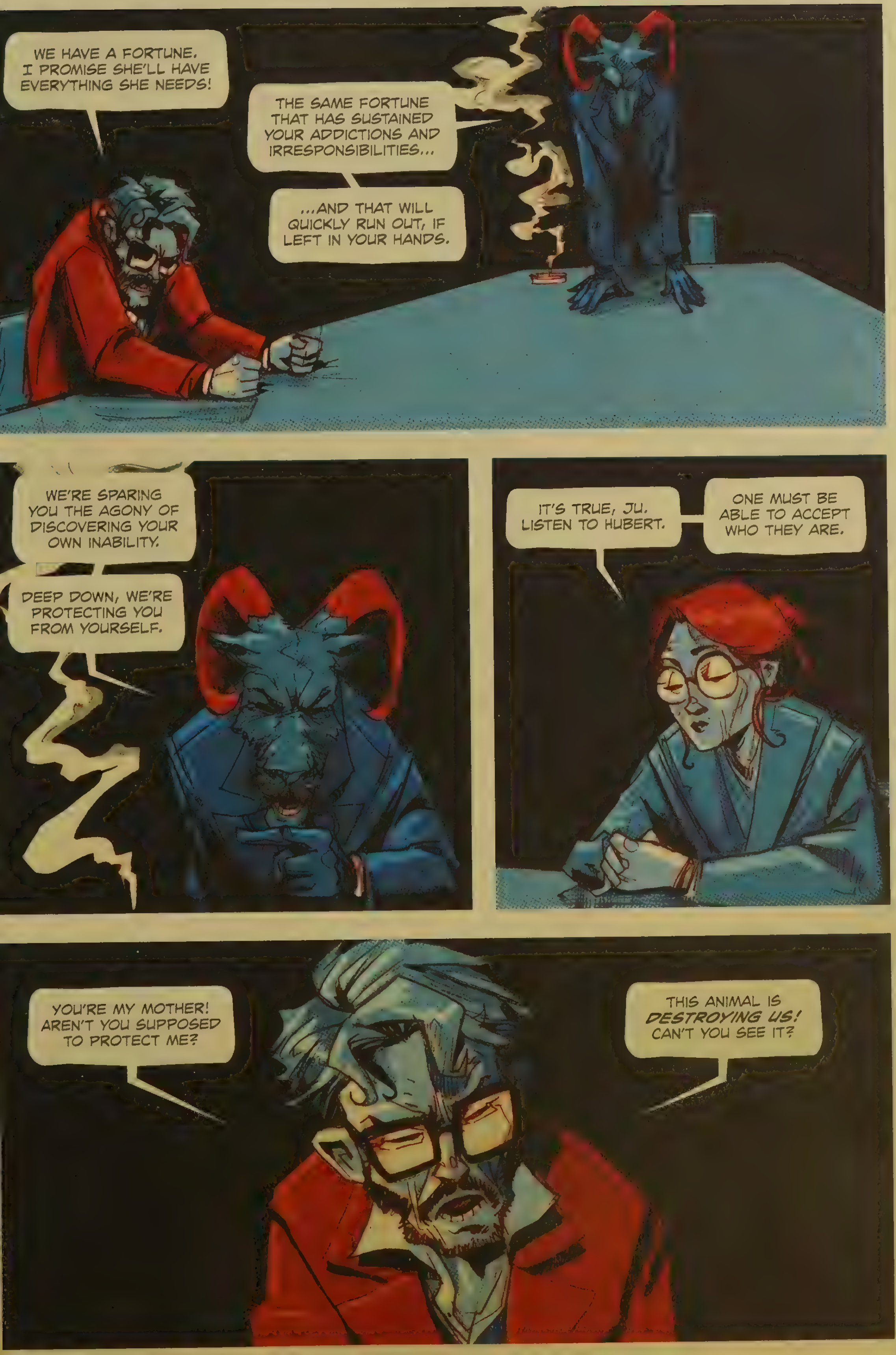

AT HIS FUNERAL, WHEREVER YOU LOOKED...
...YOU COULD SEE SOME OF THE WORLD'S MOST DISTINGUISHED PIANISTS.
I THOUGHT I'D FINALLY FEEL SOME RELIEF, BUT NO.
FRANÇOIS SAMSON
LE POÈTE DU PIANO
1923 · 1975
IT WAS THE SADDEST DAY OF MY LIFE.

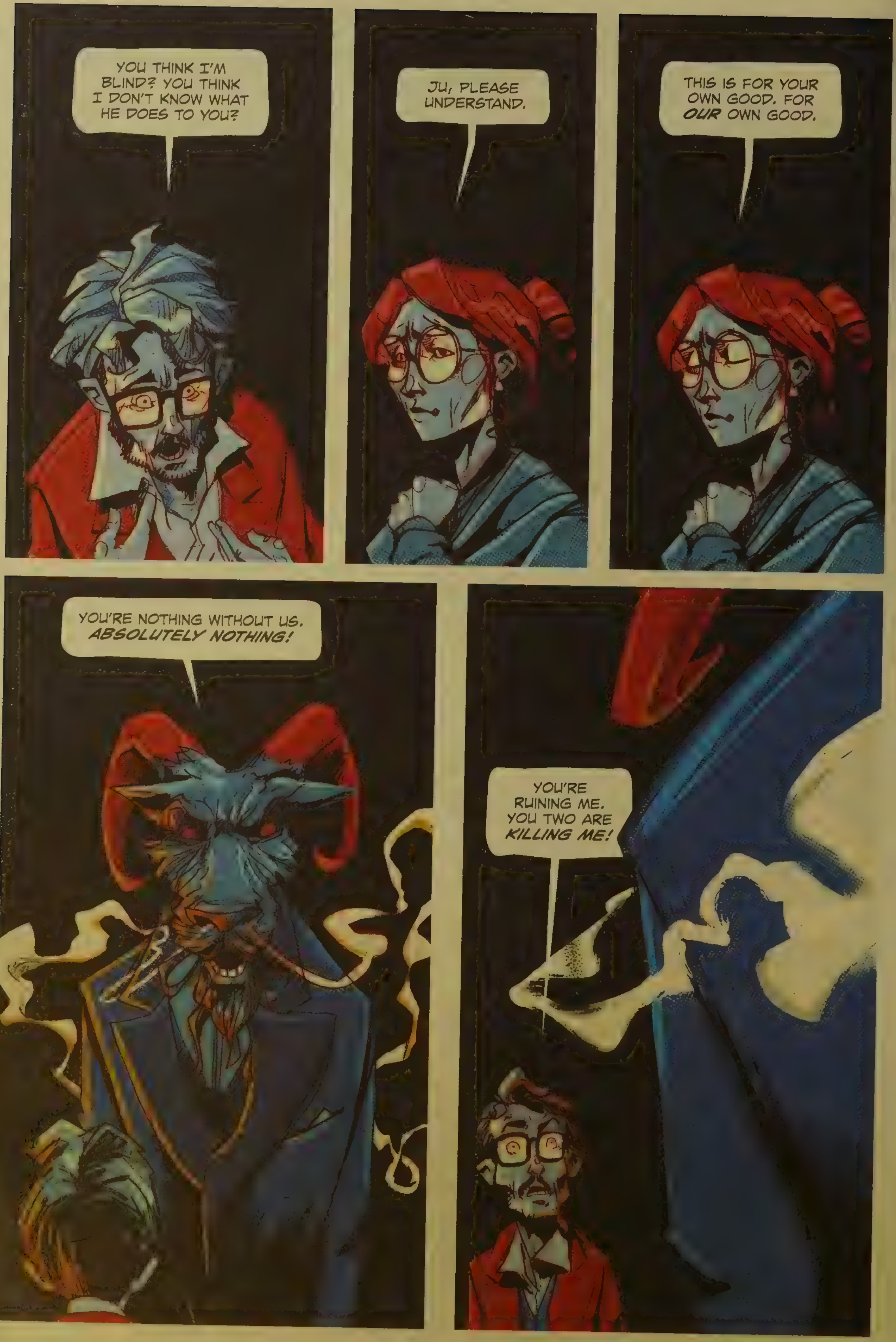

I THOUGHT IF THERE WAS A PLACE I'D SEE ANNE AGAIN, THAT WOULD BE IT...
BUT SHE NEVER SHOWED UP.
ERNST TOLD ME THAT SINCE SHE LEFT HIM, FRANÇOIS HAD ALIENATED HIMSELF FROM THE WORLD.
HE STOPPED TALKING, AND, LITTLE BY LITTLE, BECAME UNRECOGNISABLE.
BY TAKING ANNE-MARIE FROM HIM, I KNEW EXACTLY WHAT I WAS DOING TO HIM.
I KILLED FRANÇOIS SAMSON.

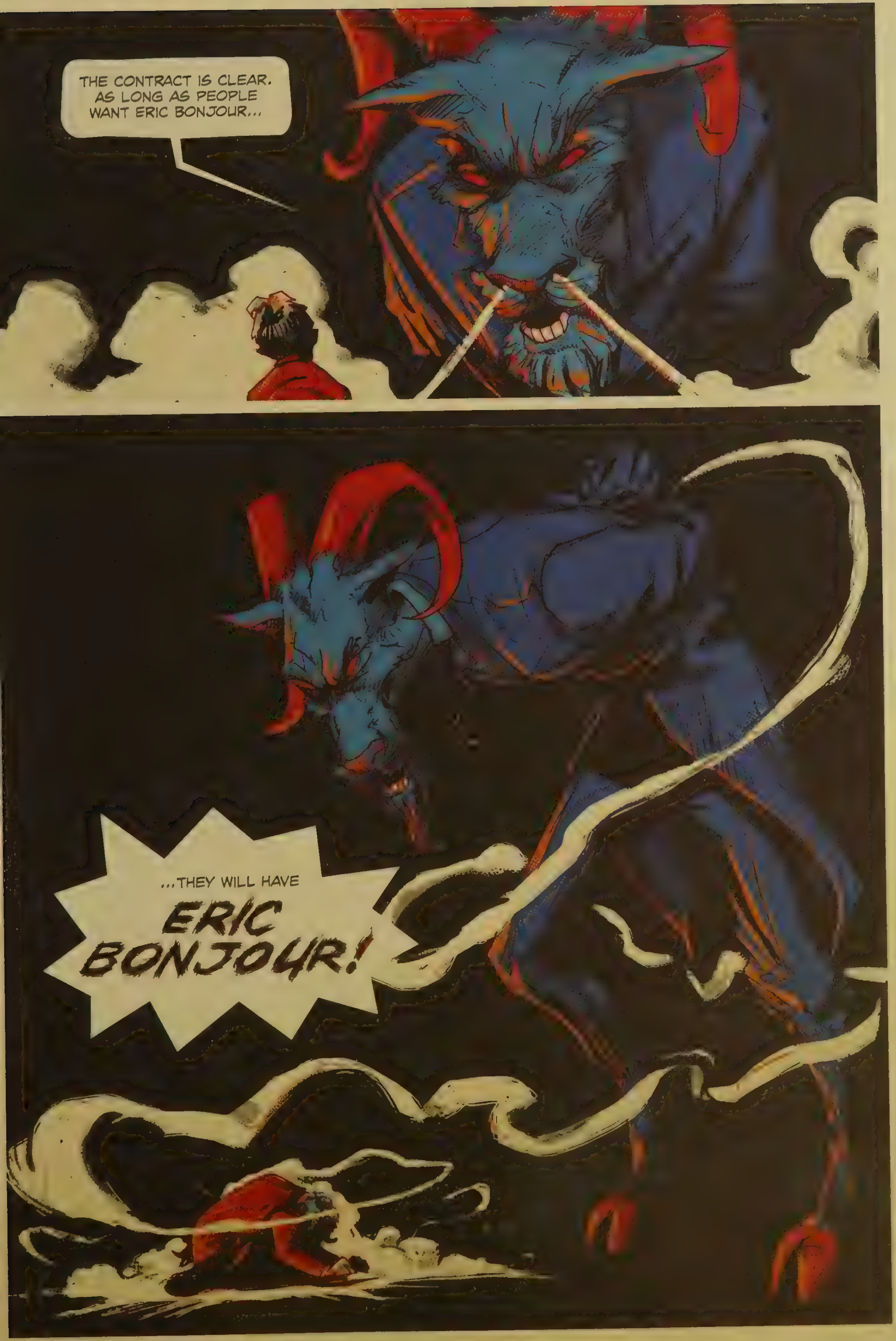

HOW CAN YOU SAY SOMETHING LIKE THAT?
IT WASN'T YOUR FAULT! IN FACT, IF IT WASN'T FOR YOU, HE WOULDN'T HAVE GOTTEN OUT OF THE CONCENTRATION CAMP ALIVE.
HE WOULD NEVER HAVE MADE A SINGLE RECORD, HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT THAT?
MONSIEUR... YOUR HAND.
HOW DID THIS HAPPEN?

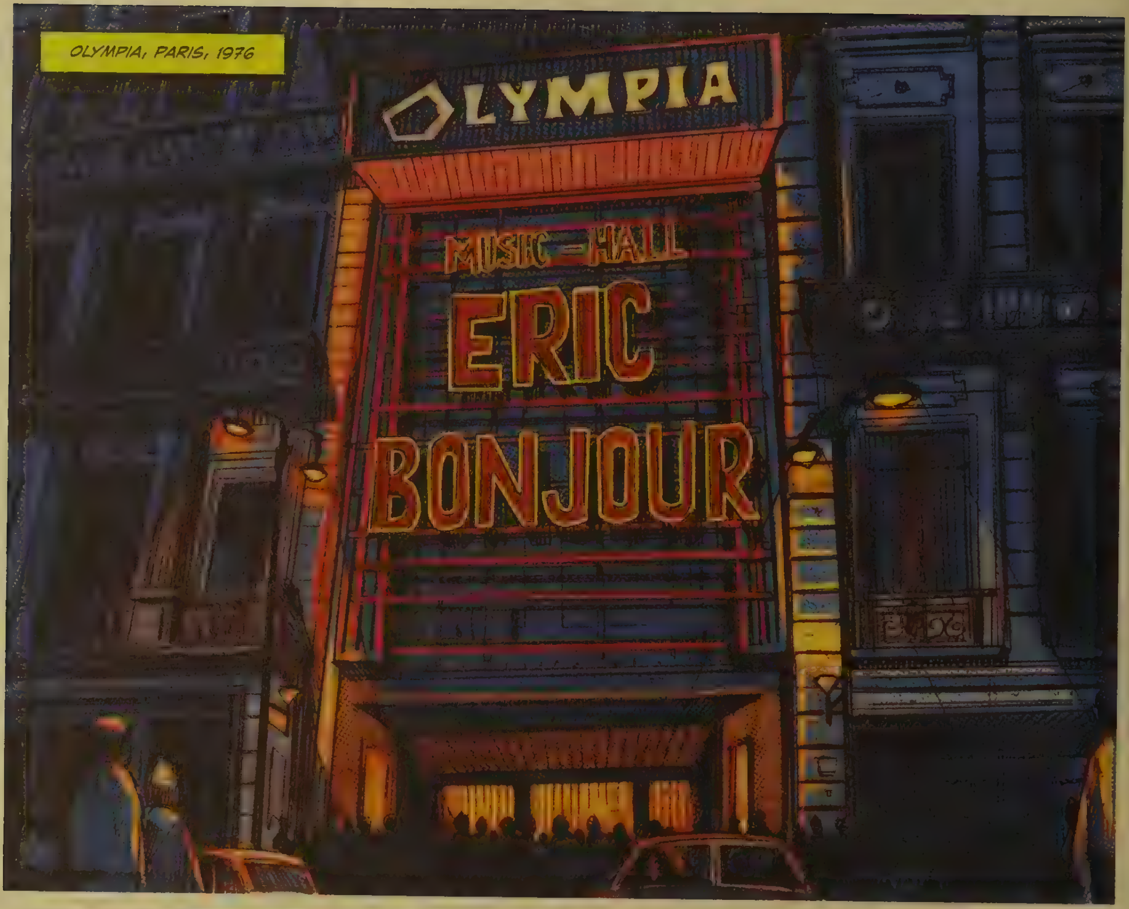

I CAN'T STAND THIS ANYMORE, TRITON. I WANT OUT.
I'M NOT LIKE THIS.
THIS RIDICULOUS OUTFIT. THIS MUSIC.
I DON'T WANT ANY OF THIS!
BUT... WHAT ABOUT YOUR SUCCESS, JU?
YOUR FANS?

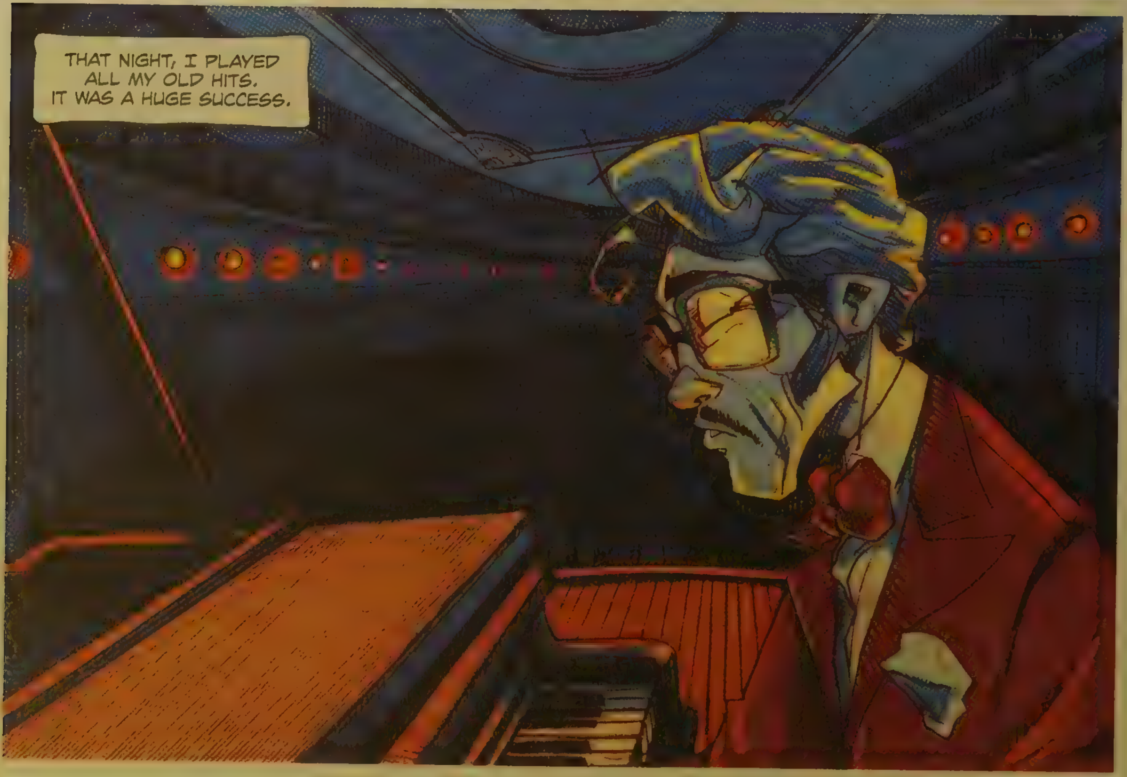

ENOUGH OF THIS FARCE. OF THIS STUPIDITY.
I HAD ENOUGH OF THIS ERIC BONJOUR BULLSHIT. I WANT TO PLAY OTHER THINGS, MOTHER. ENOUGH.
WHAT THINGS, JU?
I DON'T KNOW! RAVEL, CHOPIN, SCRIABIN. ANYTHING ELSE BUT THIS.
I WANT TO WRITE MY OWN MUSIC... OR, AT LEAST, TRY. I CAN'T EVEN USE MY REAL NAME!
YOU'VE ALREADY MADE A LOT OF MONEY OFF ME. I THINK I DESERVE THIS.
PLEASE, TRITON.
ERIC, YOUR MOTHER DEPENDS ON YOU. WE CAN'T TAKE ANY CHANCES AT THIS STAGE.

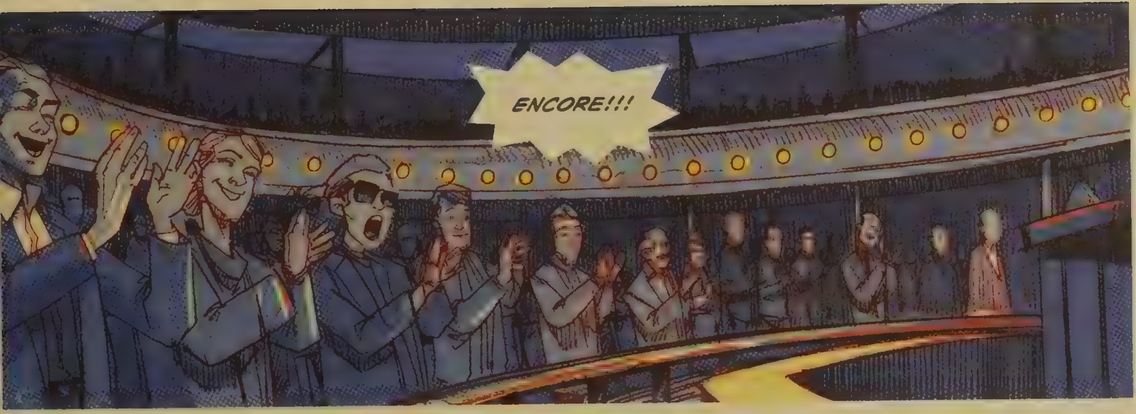

WE HAVE A FORTUNE. I PROMISE SHE'LL HAVE EVERYTHING SHE NEEDS!
THE SAME FORTUNE THAT HAS SUSTAINED YOUR ADDICTIONS AND IRRESPONSIBILITIES...
...AND THAT WILL QUICKLY RUN OUT, IF LEFT IN YOUR HANDS.
WE'RE SPARING YOU THE AGONY OF DISCOVERING YOUR OWN INABILITY.
DEEP DOWN, WE'RE PROTECTING YOU FROM YOURSELF.
IT'S TRUE, JU. LISTEN TO HUBERT.
ONE MUST BE ABLE TO ACCEPT WHO THEY ARE.
YOU'RE MY MOTHER! AREN'T YOU SUPPOSED TO PROTECT ME?
THIS ANIMAL IS *DESTROYING US!* CAN'T YOU SEE IT?

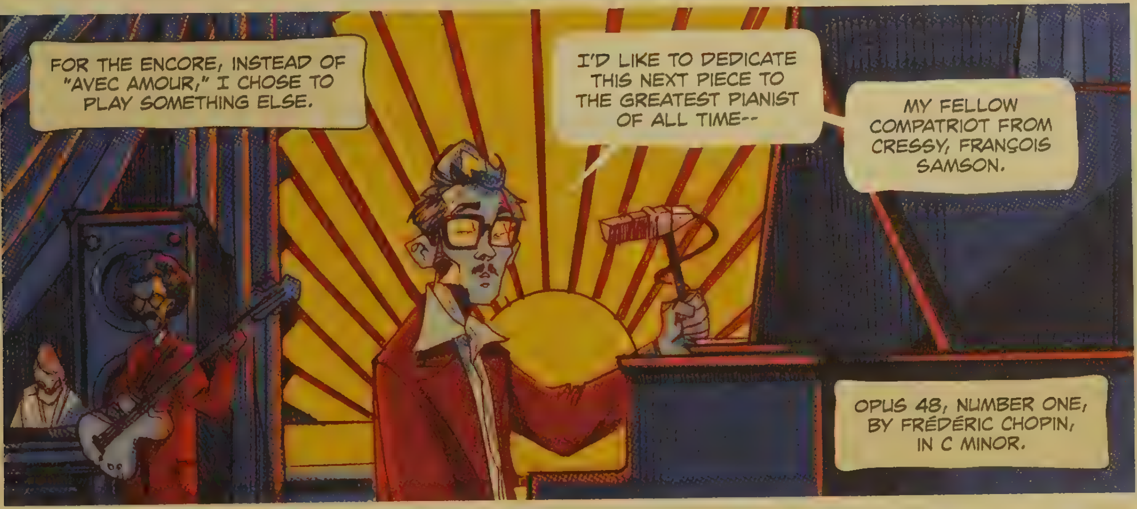

YOU THINK I'M BLIND? YOU THINK I DON'T KNOW WHAT HE DOES TO YOU?
JU, PLEASE UNDERSTAND.
THIS IS FOR YOUR OWN GOOD. FOR *OUR* OWN GOOD.
YOU'RE NOTHING WITHOUT US. *ABSOLUTELY NOTHING!*
YOU'RE RUINING ME. YOU TWO ARE *KILLING ME!*

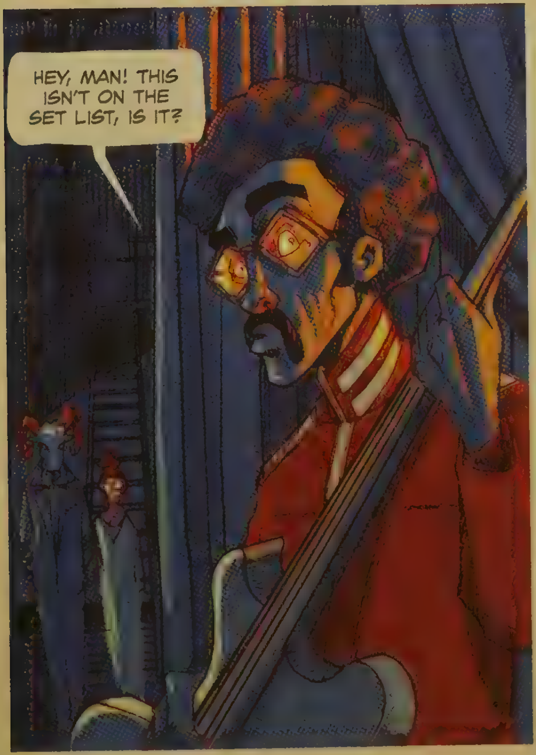

THE CONTRACT IS CLEAR. AS LONG AS PEOPLE WANT ERIC BONJOUR...
...THEY WILL HAVE ERIC BONJOUR!

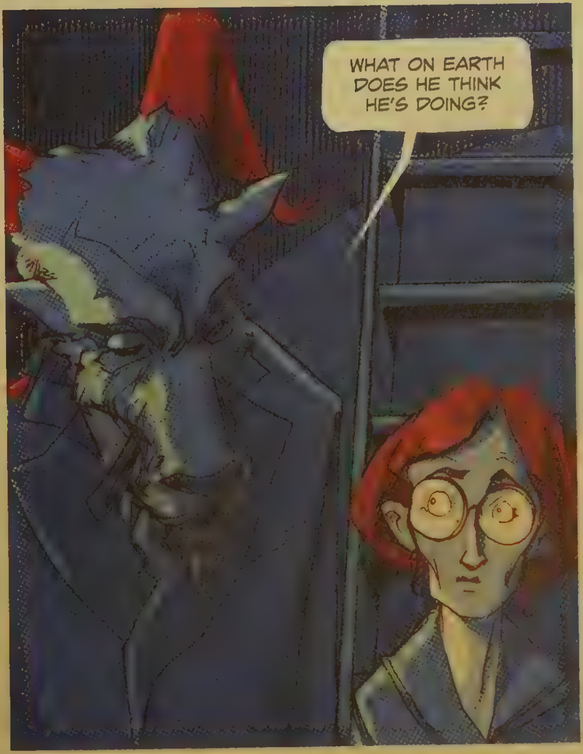

OLYMPIA, PARIS, 1976
OLYMPIA
MUSIC-HALL
ERIC
BONJOUR

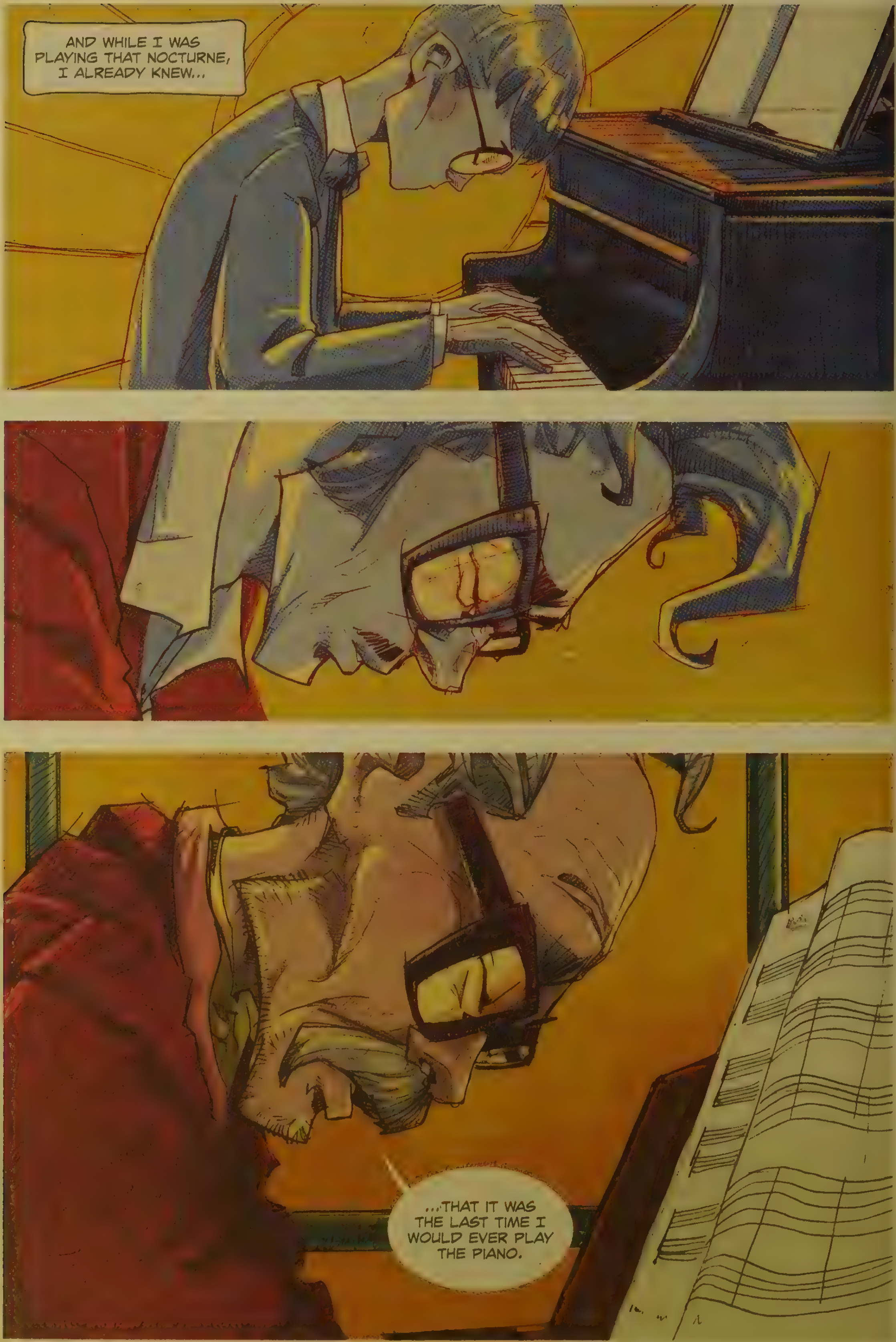

THAT NIGHT, I PLAYED ALL MY OLD HITS. IT WAS A HUGE SUCCESS.

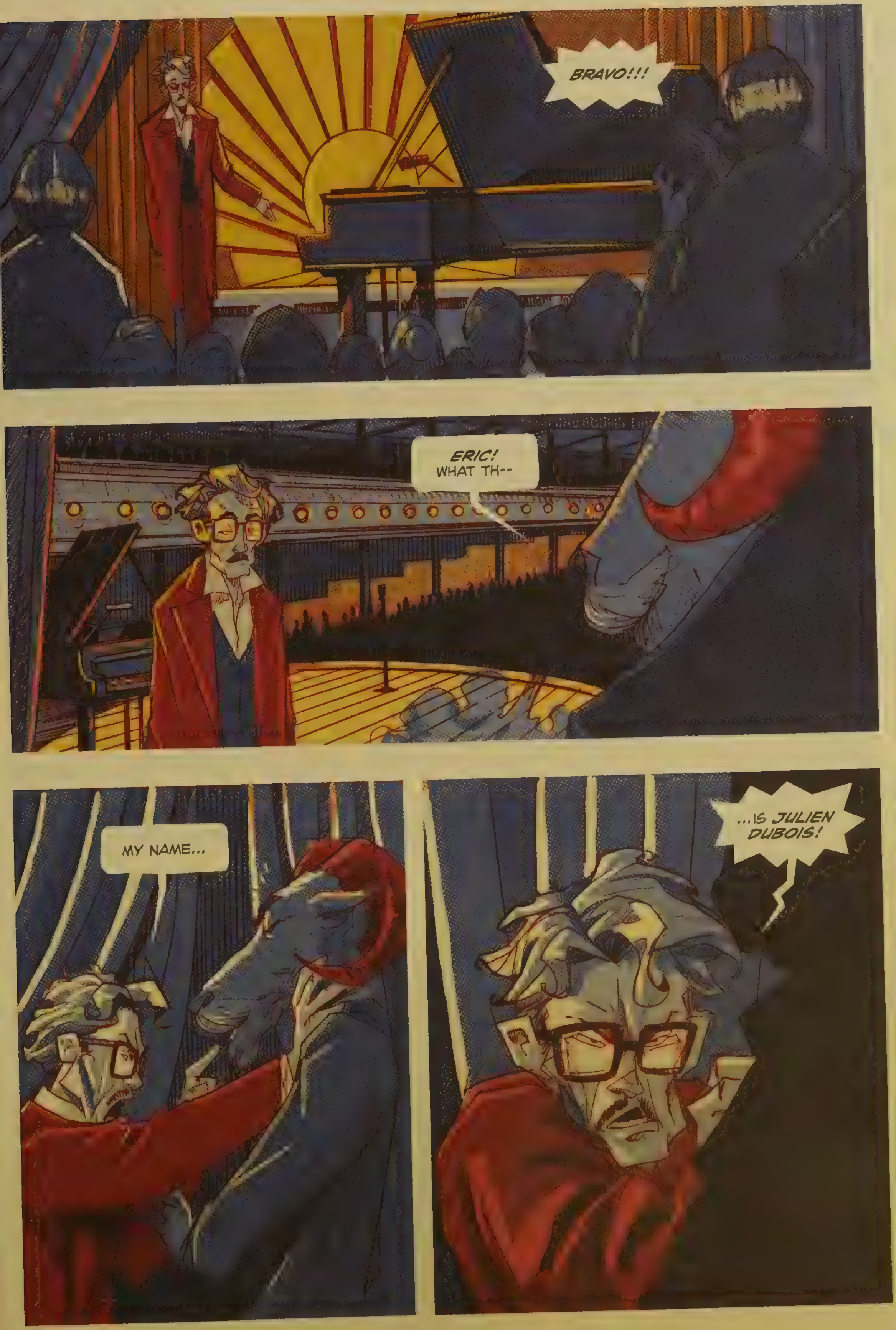

ENCORE!!!

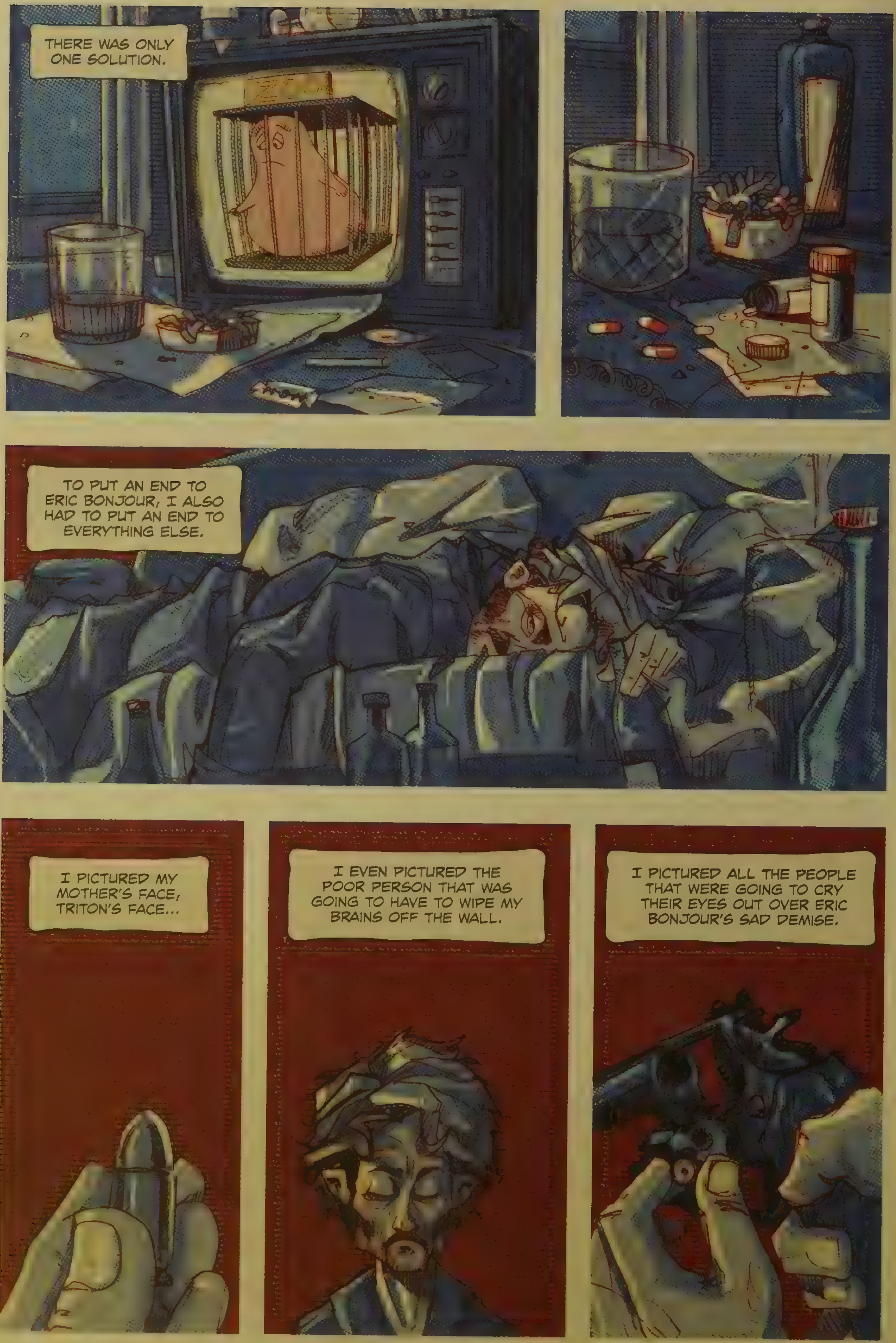

FOR THE ENCORE, INSTEAD OF "AVEC AMOUR," I CHOSE TO PLAY SOMETHING ELSE.
I'D LIKE TO DEDICATE THIS NEXT PIECE TO THE GREATEST PIANIST OF ALL TIME--
MY FELLOW COMPATRIOT FROM CRESSY, FRANÇOIS SAMSON.
OPUS 48, NUMBER ONE, BY FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN, IN C MINOR.

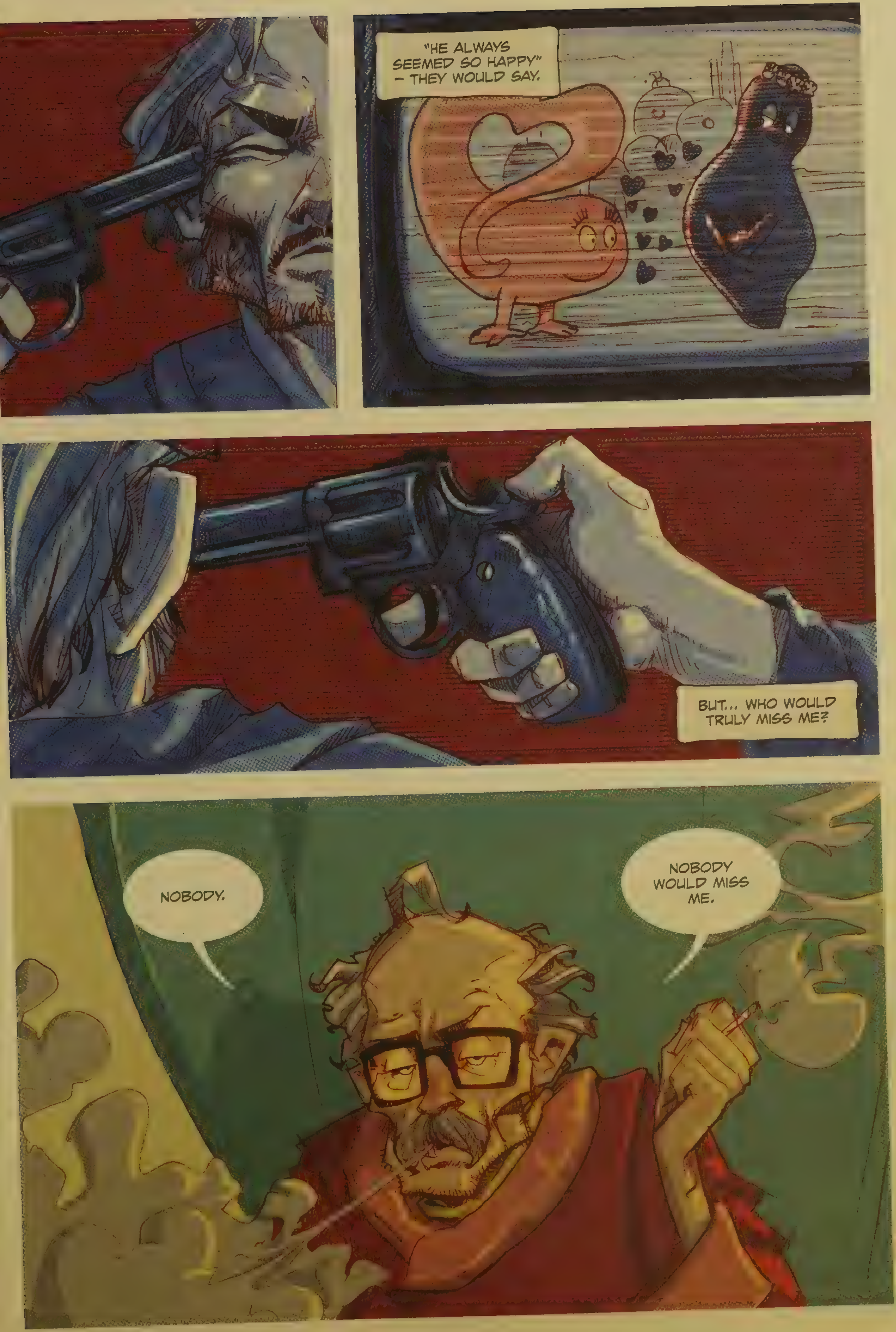

HEY, MAN! THIS ISN'T ON THE SET LIST, IS IT?

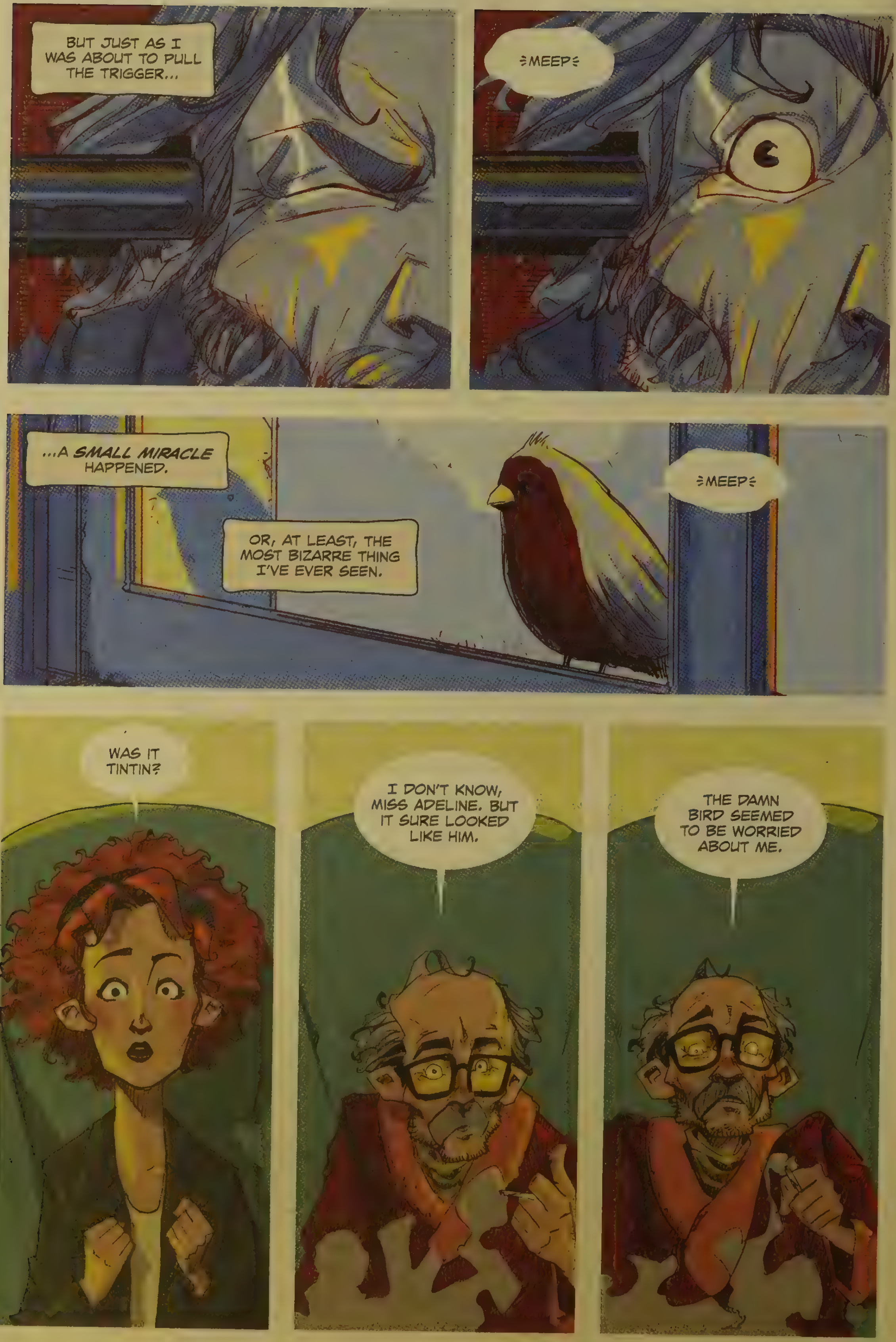

WHAT ON EARTH DOES HE THINK HE'S DOING?

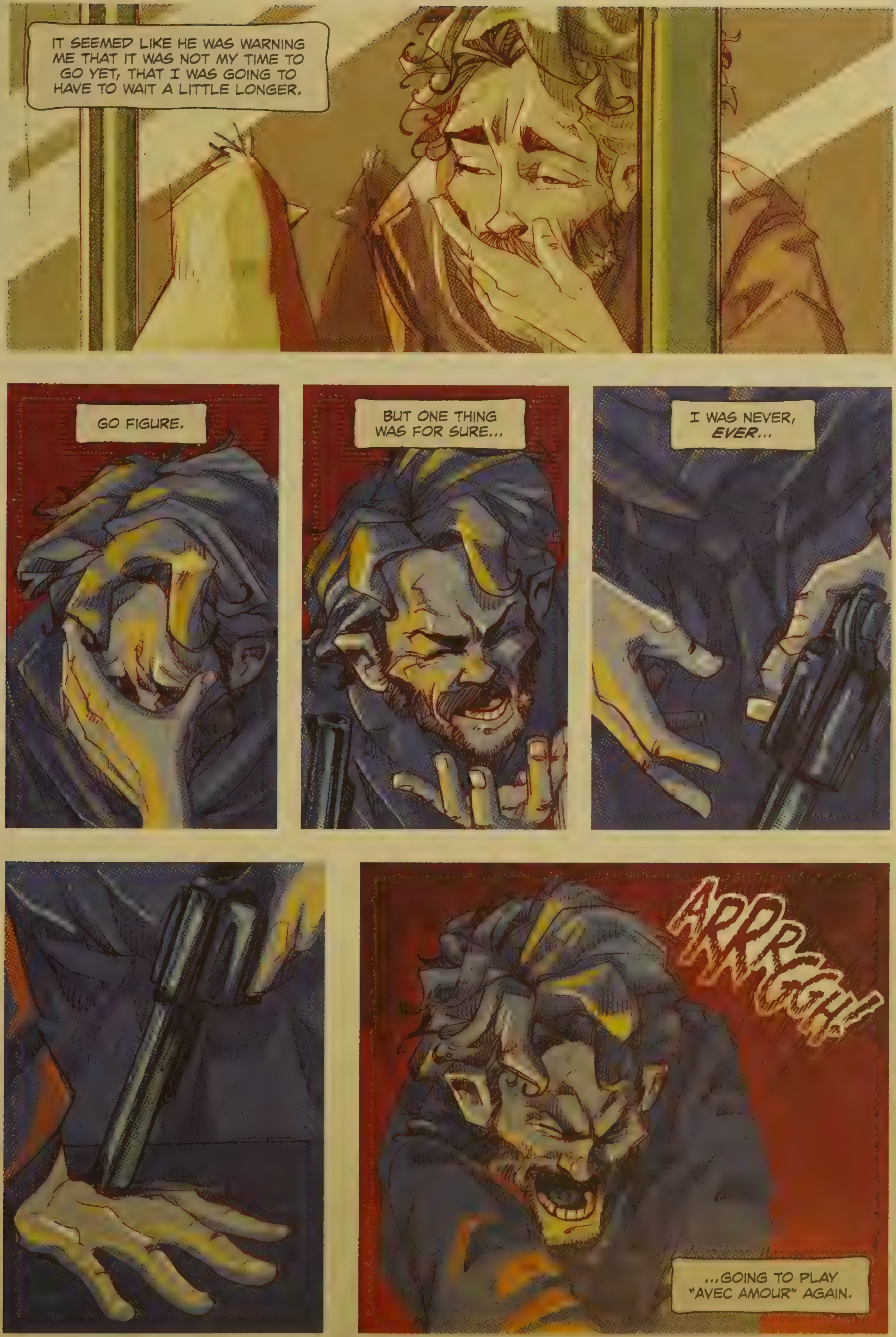

AND WHILE I WAS PLAYING THAT NOCTURNE, I ALREADY KNEW...
...THAT IT WAS THE LAST TIME I WOULD EVER PLAY THE PIANO.

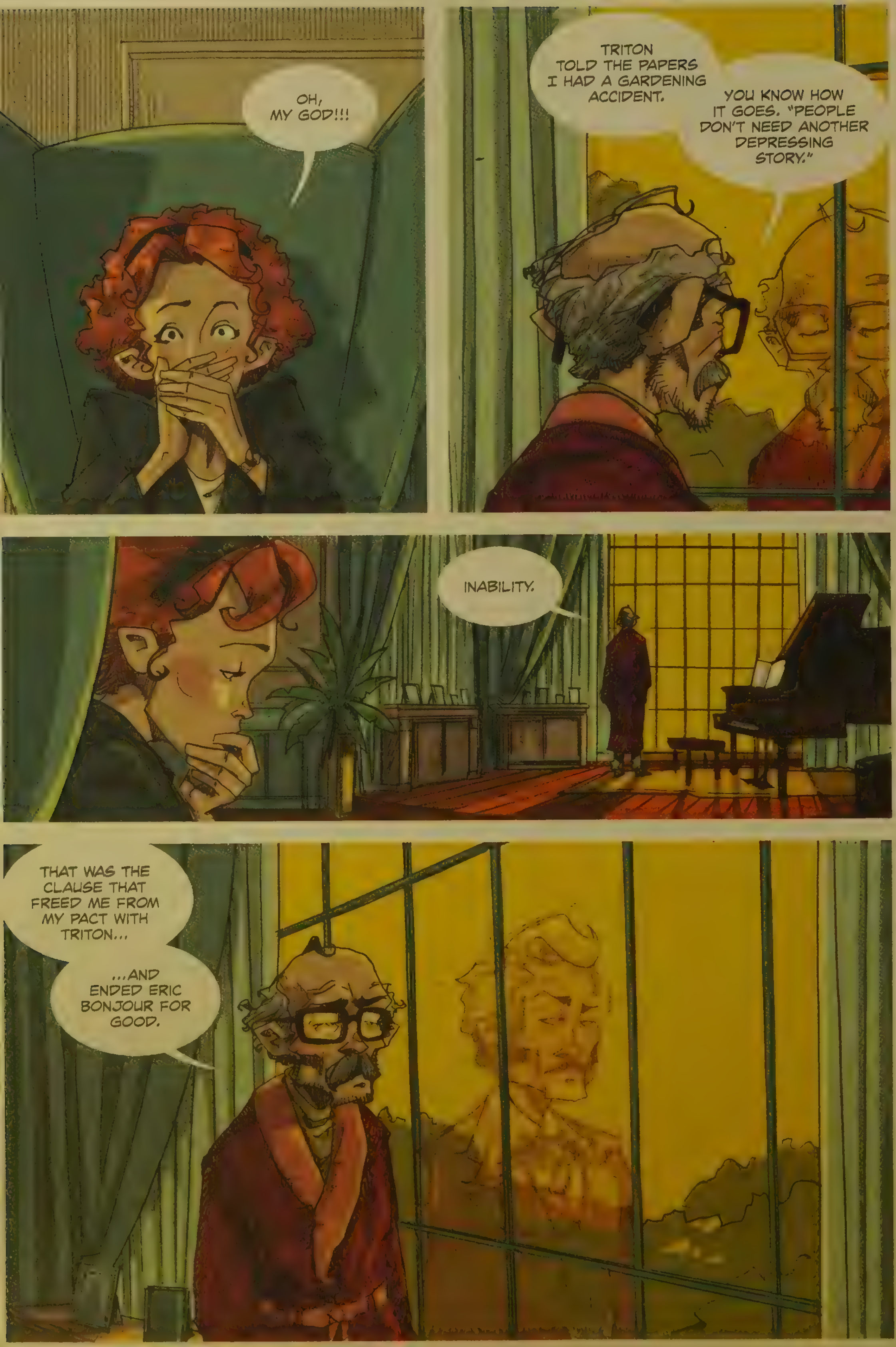

BRAVO!!!
ERIC! WHAT TH--
MY NAME...
...IS JULIEN DUBOIS!

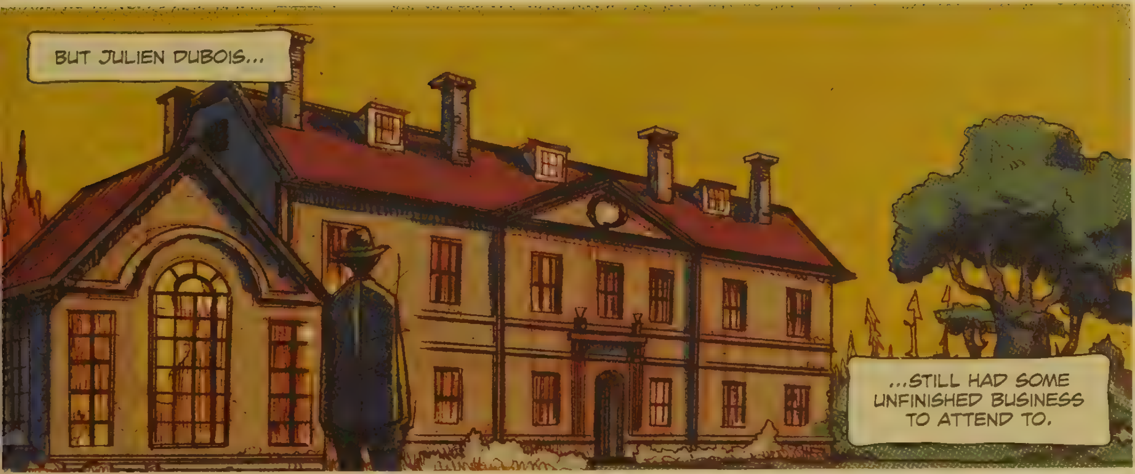

THERE WAS ONLY ONE SOLUTION.
TO PUT AN END TO ERIC BONJOUR, I ALSO HAD TO PUT AN END TO EVERYTHING ELSE.
I PICTURED MY MOTHER'S FACE, TRITON'S FACE...
I EVEN PICTURED THE POOR PERSON THAT WAS GOING TO HAVE TO WIPE MY BRAINS OFF THE WALL.
I PICTURED ALL THE PEOPLE THAT WERE GOING TO CRY THEIR EYES OUT OVER ERIC BONJOUR'S SAD DEMISE.

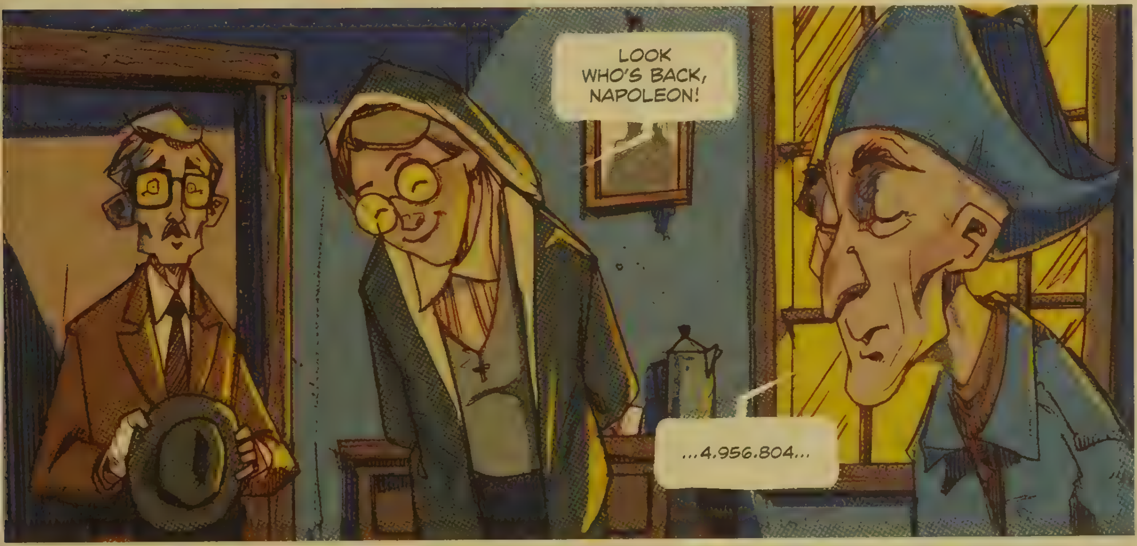

"HE ALWAYS SEEMED SO HAPPY" – THEY WOULD SAY.
BUT... WHO WOULD TRULY MISS ME?
NOBODY.
NOBODY WOULD MISS ME.

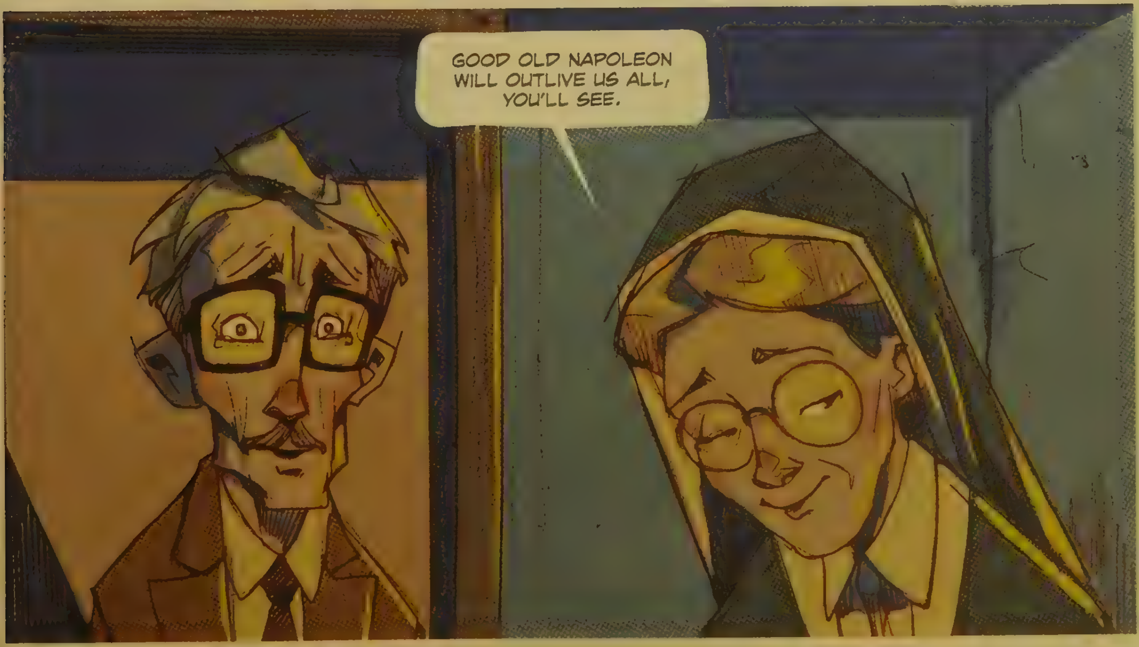

BUT JUST AS I WAS ABOUT TO PULL THE TRIGGER...
≑MEEP≑
...A *SMALL MIRACLE* HAPPENED.
OR, AT LEAST, THE MOST BIZARRE THING I'VE EVER SEEN.
≑MEEP≑
WAS IT TINTIN?
I DON'T KNOW, MISS ADELINE. BUT IT SURE LOOKED LIKE HIM.
THE DAMN BIRD SEEMED TO BE WORRIED ABOUT ME.

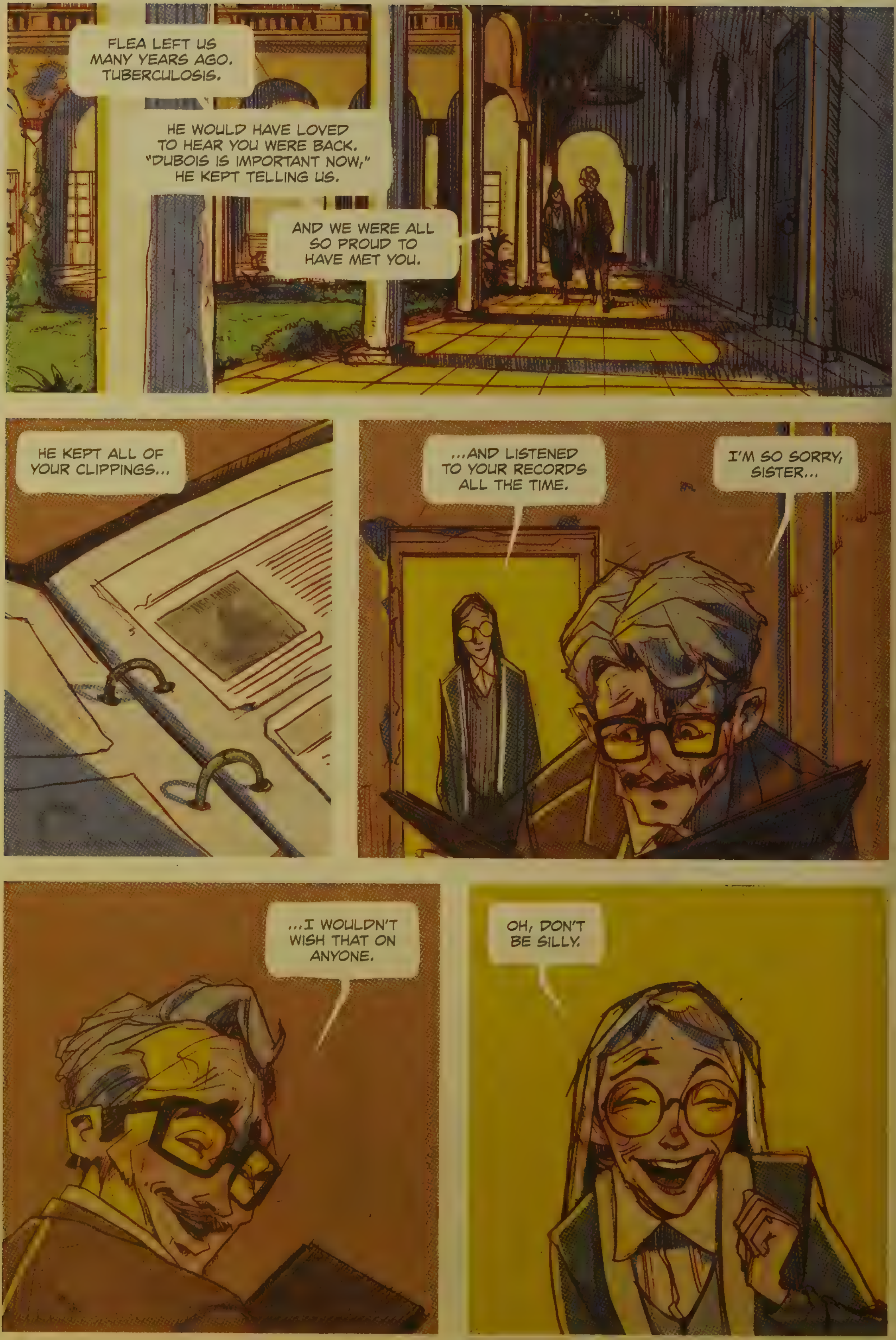

IT SEEMED LIKE HE WAS WARNING ME THAT IT WAS NOT MY TIME TO GO YET, THAT I WAS GOING TO HAVE TO WAIT A LITTLE LONGER.
GO FIGURE.
BUT ONE THING WAS FOR SURE...
I WAS NEVER, *EVER*...
ARRRGGH!
...GOING TO PLAY "AVEC AMOUR" AGAIN.

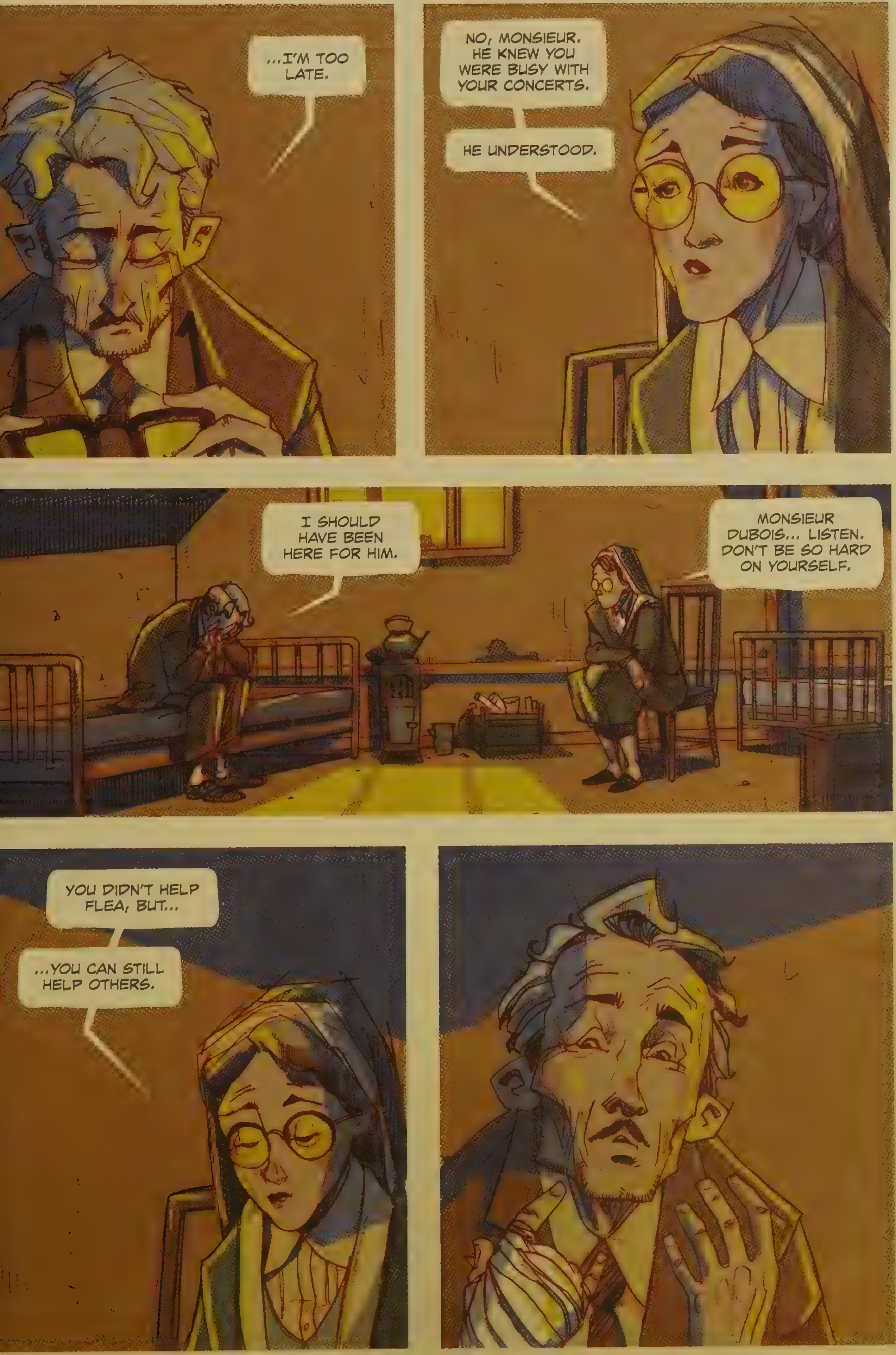

OH, MY GOD!!!
TRITON TOLD THE PAPERS I HAD A GARDENING ACCIDENT.
YOU KNOW HOW IT GOES. "PEOPLE DON'T NEED ANOTHER DEPRESSING STORY."
INABILITY.
THAT WAS THE CLAUSE THAT FREED ME FROM MY PACT WITH TRITON...
...AND ENDED ERIC BONJOUR FOR GOOD.

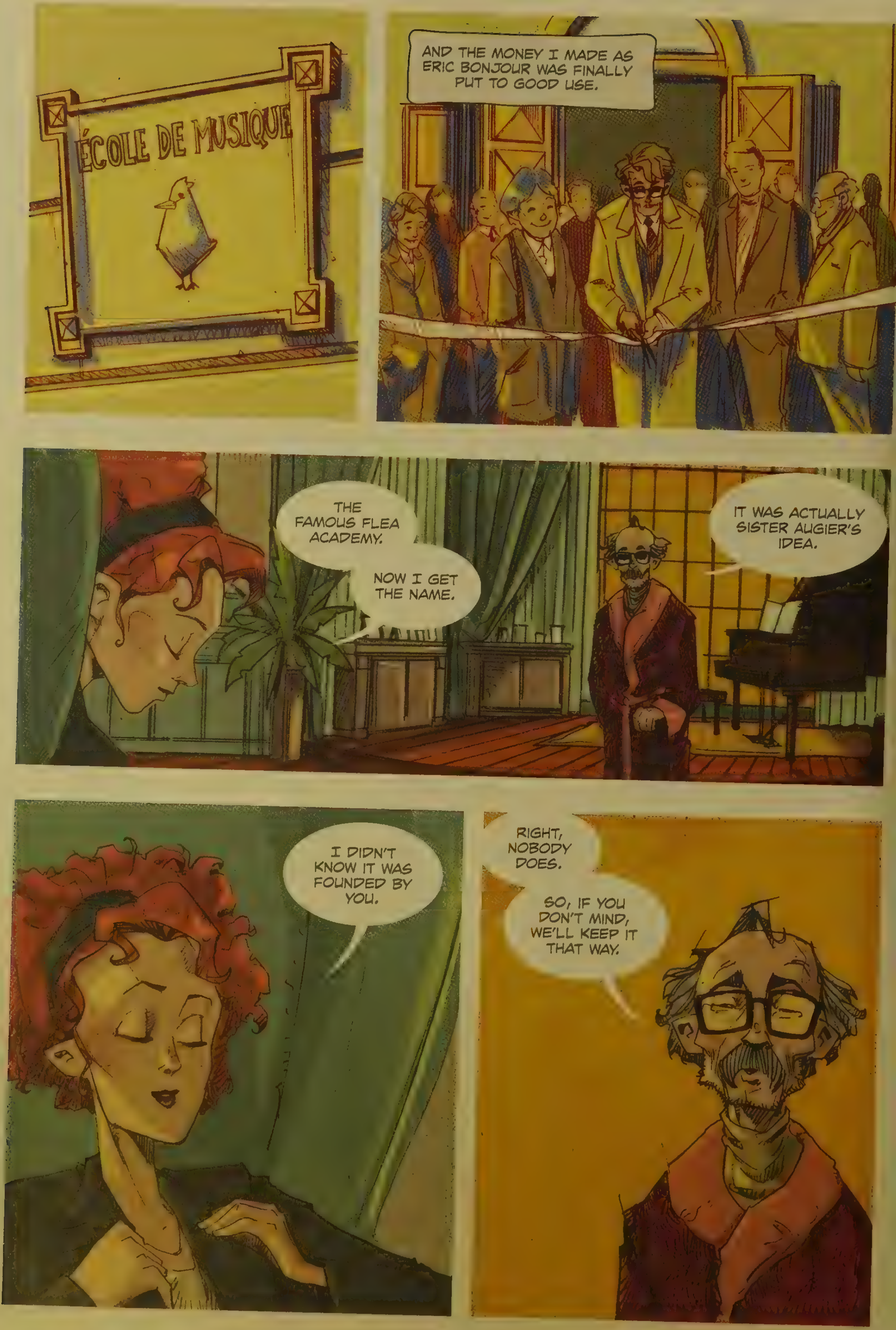

BUT JULIEN DUBOIS...
...STILL HAD SOME UNFINISHED BUSINESS TO ATTEND TO.

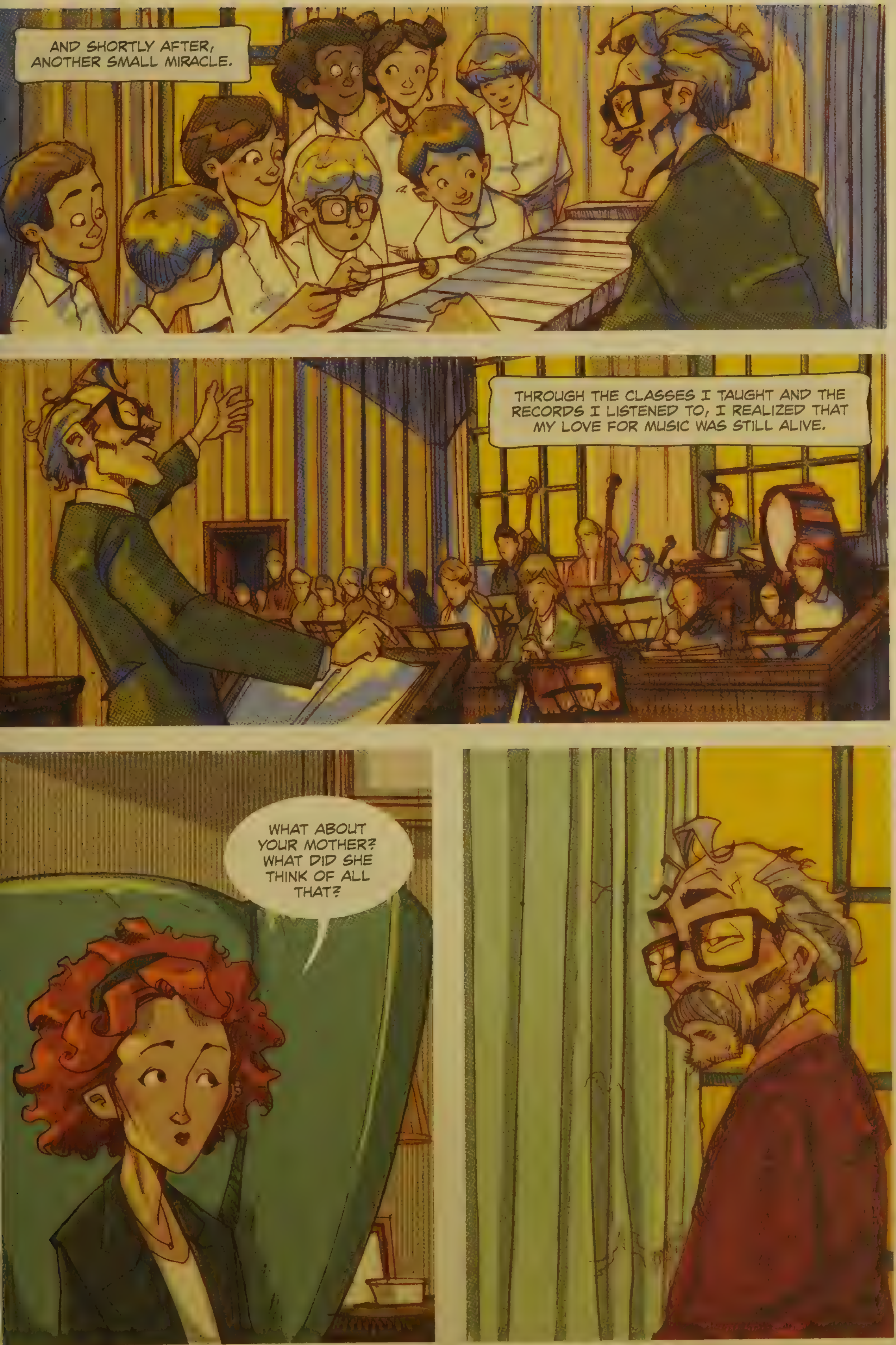

LOOK WHO'S BACK, NAPOLEON!
...4.956.804...

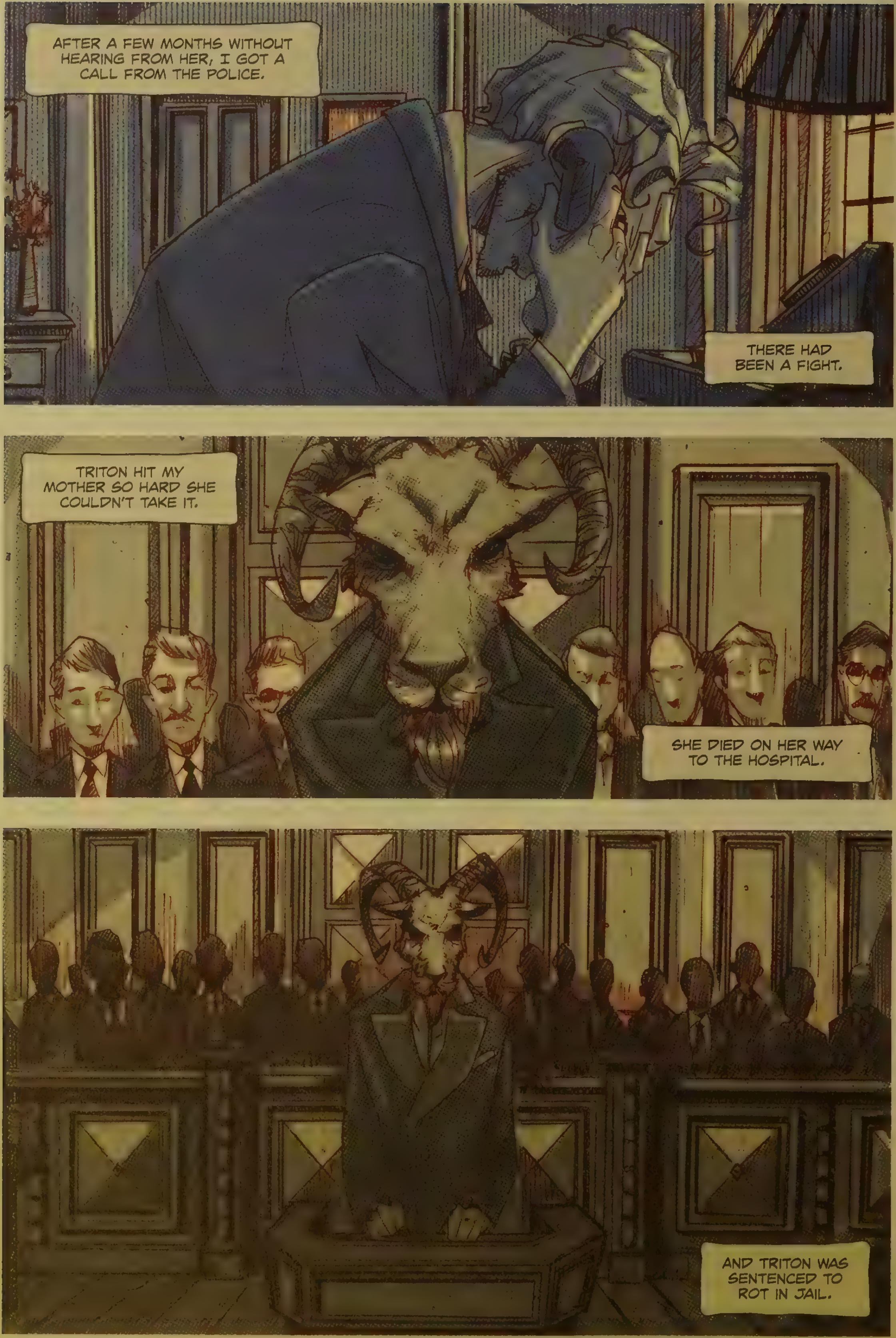

GOOD OLD NAPOLEON WILL OUTLIVE US ALL, YOU'LL SEE.

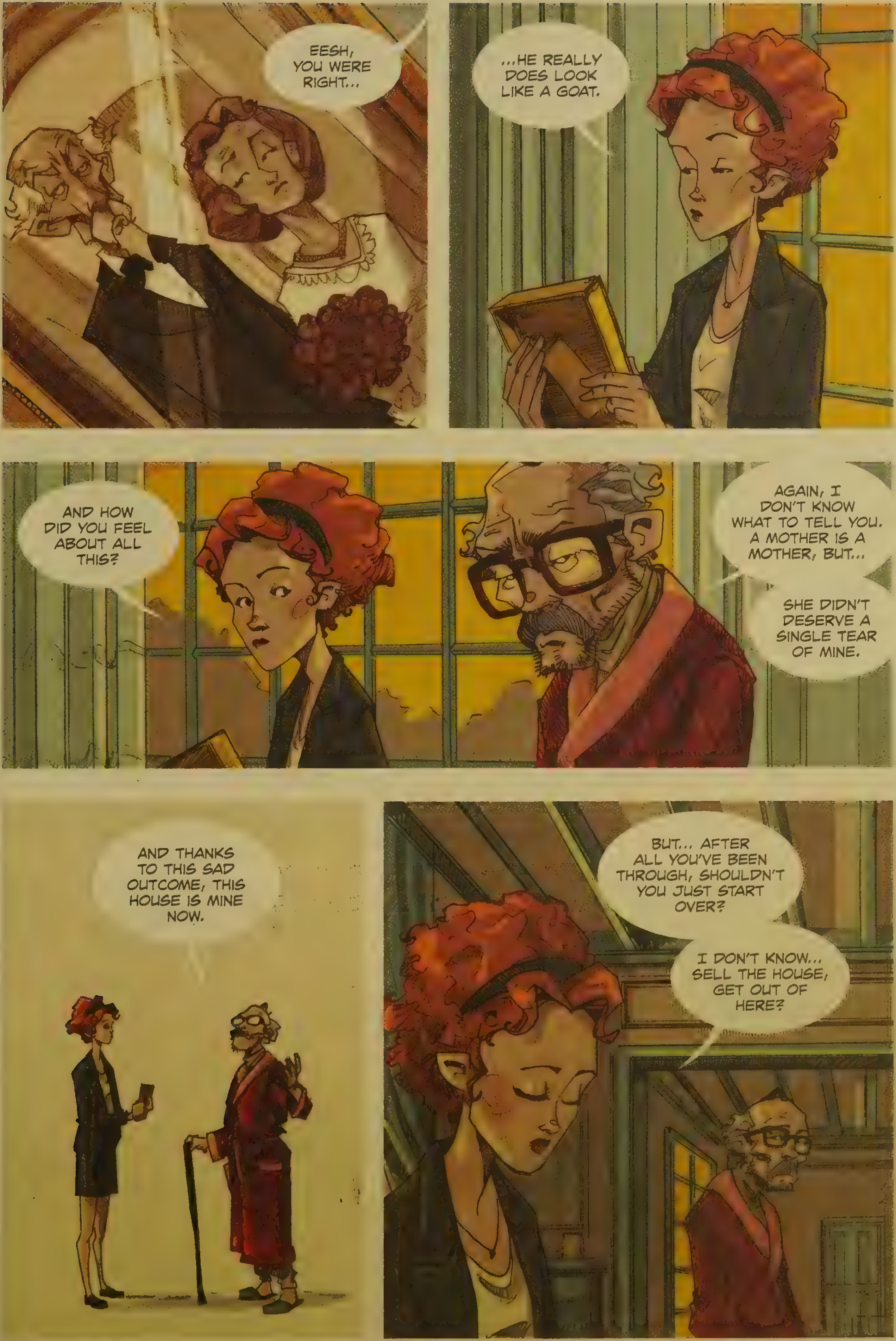

FLEA LEFT US MANY YEARS AGO. TUBERCULOSIS.
HE WOULD HAVE LOVED TO HEAR YOU WERE BACK. "DUBOIS IS IMPORTANT NOW," HE KEPT TELLING US.
AND WE WERE ALL SO PROUD TO HAVE MET YOU.
HE KEPT ALL OF YOUR CLIPPINGS...
...AND LISTENED TO YOUR RECORDS ALL THE TIME.
I'M SO SORRY, SISTER...
...I WOULDN'T WISH THAT ON ANYONE.
OH, DON'T BE SILLY.

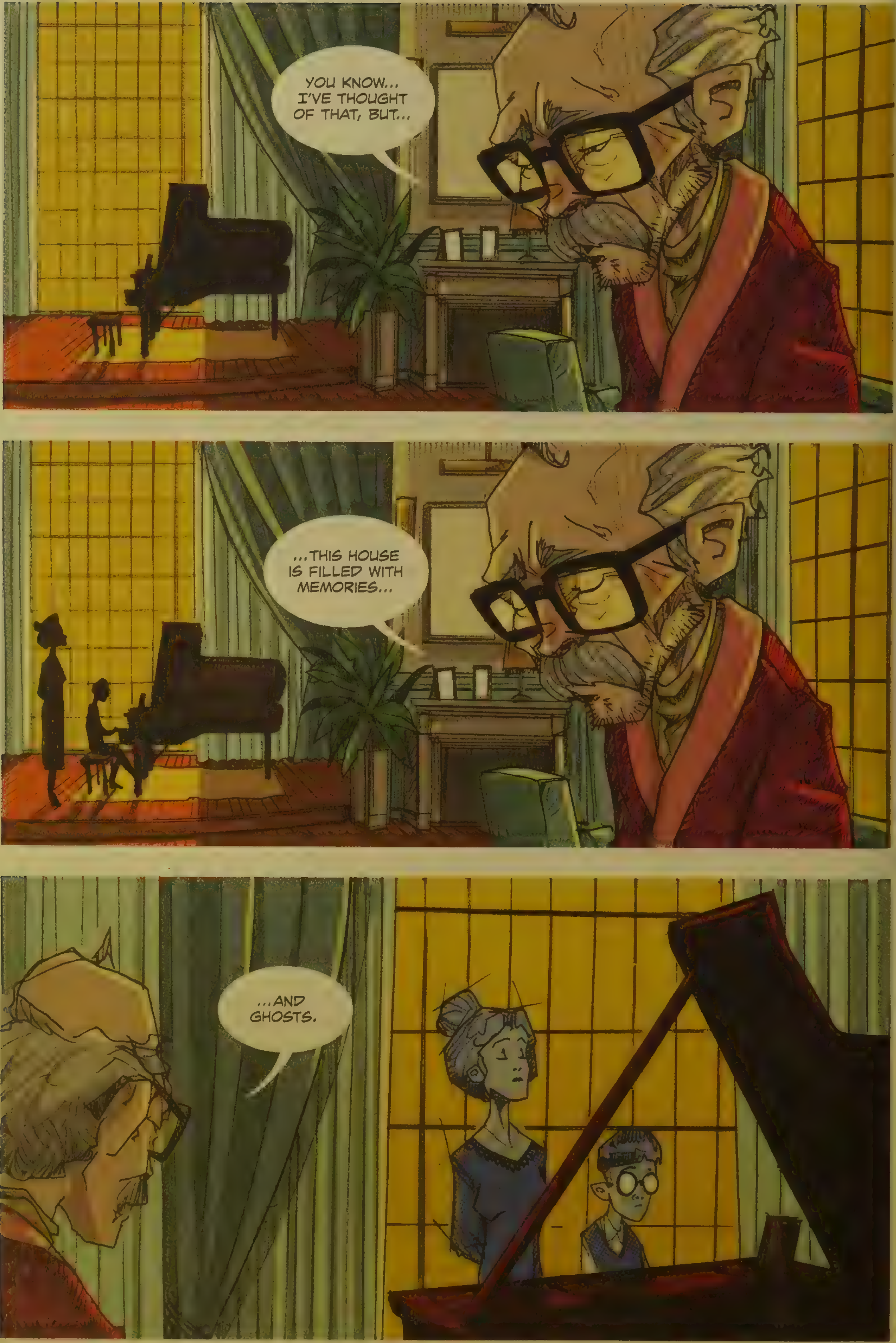

...I'M TOO LATE.
NO, MONSIEUR. HE KNEW YOU WERE BUSY WITH YOUR CONCERTS.
HE UNDERSTOOD.
I SHOULD HAVE BEEN HERE FOR HIM.
MONSIEUR DUBOIS... LISTEN. DON'T BE SO HARD ON YOURSELF.
YOU DIDN'T HELP FLEA, BUT...
...YOU CAN STILL HELP OTHERS.

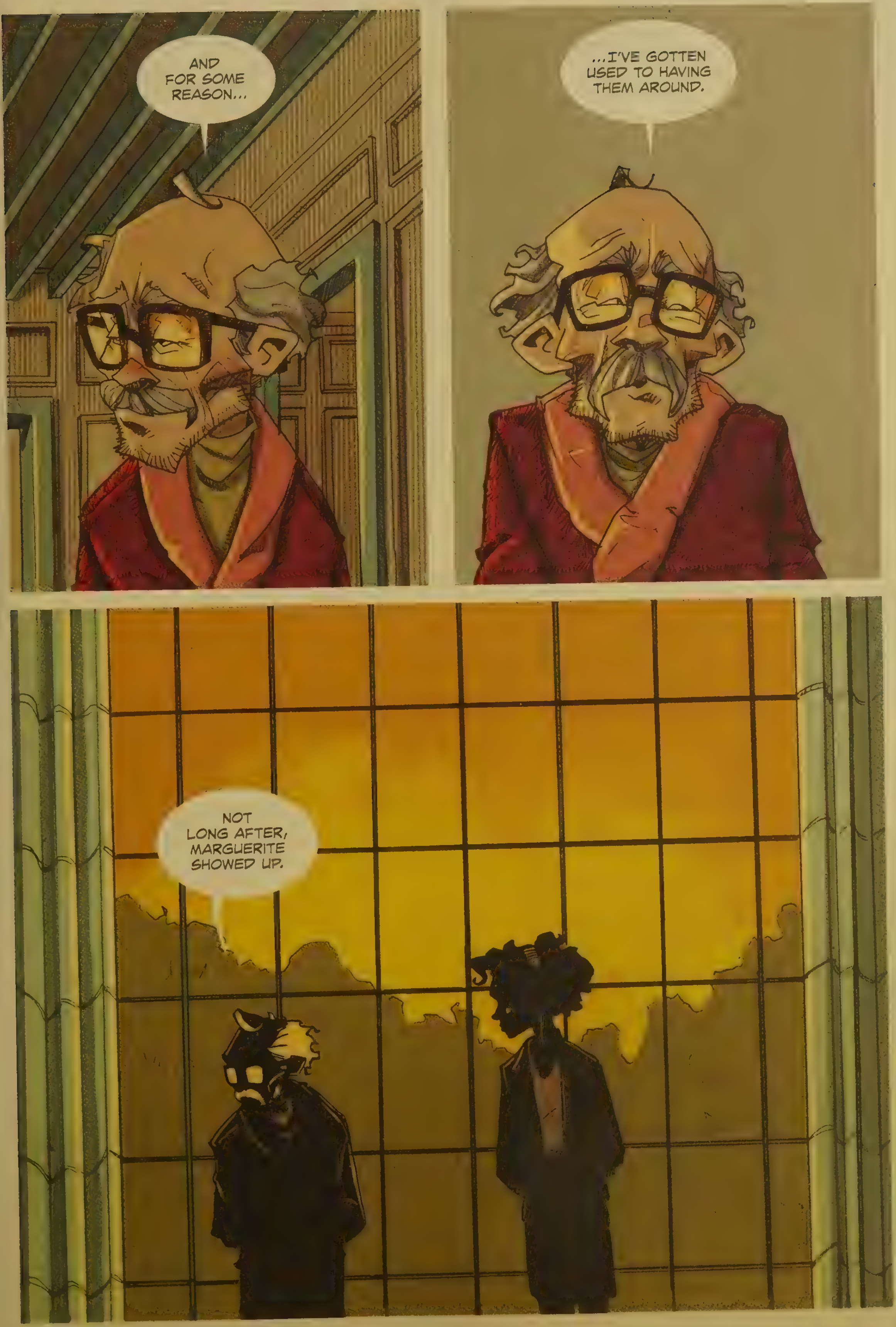

ÉCOLE DE MUSIQUE
AND THE MONEY I MADE AS ERIC BONJOUR WAS FINALLY PUT TO GOOD USE.
THE FAMOUS FLEA ACADEMY.
NOW I GET THE NAME.
IT WAS ACTUALLY SISTER AUGIER'S IDEA.
I DIDN'T KNOW IT WAS FOUNDED BY YOU.
RIGHT, NOBODY DOES.
SO, IF YOU DON'T MIND, WE'LL KEEP IT THAT WAY.


AND SHORTLY AFTER, ANOTHER SMALL MIRACLE.
THROUGH THE CLASSES I TAUGHT AND THE RECORDS I LISTENED TO, I REALIZED THAT MY LOVE FOR MUSIC WAS STILL ALIVE.
WHAT ABOUT YOUR MOTHER? WHAT DID SHE THINK OF ALL THAT?


AFTER A FEW MONTHS WITHOUT HEARING FROM HER, I GOT A CALL FROM THE POLICE.
THERE HAD BEEN A FIGHT.
TRITON HIT MY MOTHER SO HARD SHE COULDN'T TAKE IT.
SHE DIED ON HER WAY TO THE HOSPITAL.
AND TRITON WAS SENTENCED TO ROT IN JAIL.

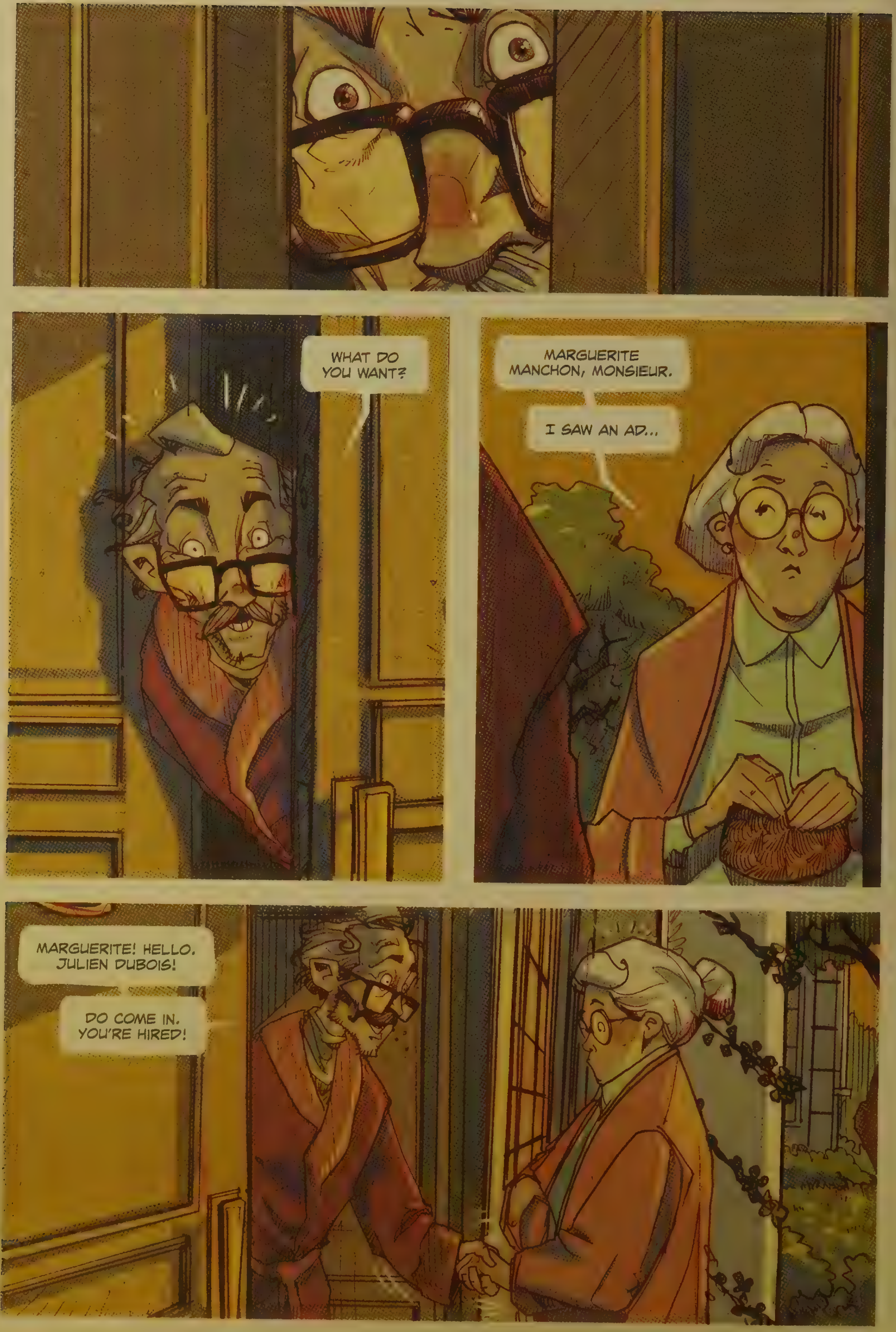

EESH, YOU WERE RIGHT...
...HE REALLY DOES LOOK LIKE A GOAT.
AND HOW DID YOU FEEL ABOUT ALL THIS?
AGAIN, I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO TELL YOU. A MOTHER IS A MOTHER, BUT...
SHE DIDN'T DESERVE A SINGLE TEAR OF MINE.
AND THANKS TO THIS SAD OUTCOME, THIS HOUSE IS MINE NOW.
BUT... AFTER ALL YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH, SHOULDN'T YOU JUST START OVER?
I DON'T KNOW... SELL THE HOUSE, GET OUT OF HERE?

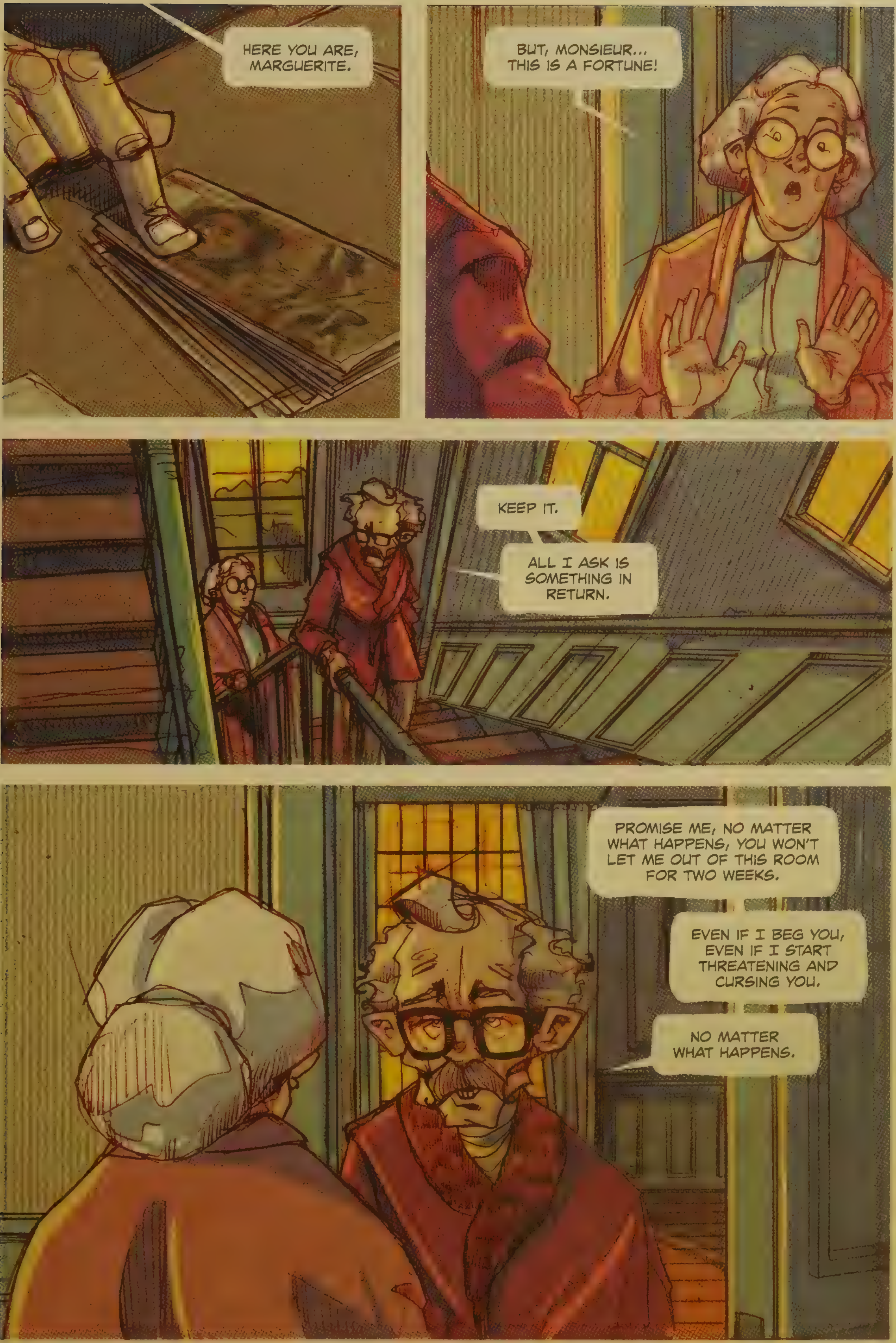

YOU KNOW... I'VE THOUGHT OF THAT, BUT...
...THIS HOUSE IS FILLED WITH MEMORIES...
...AND GHOSTS.

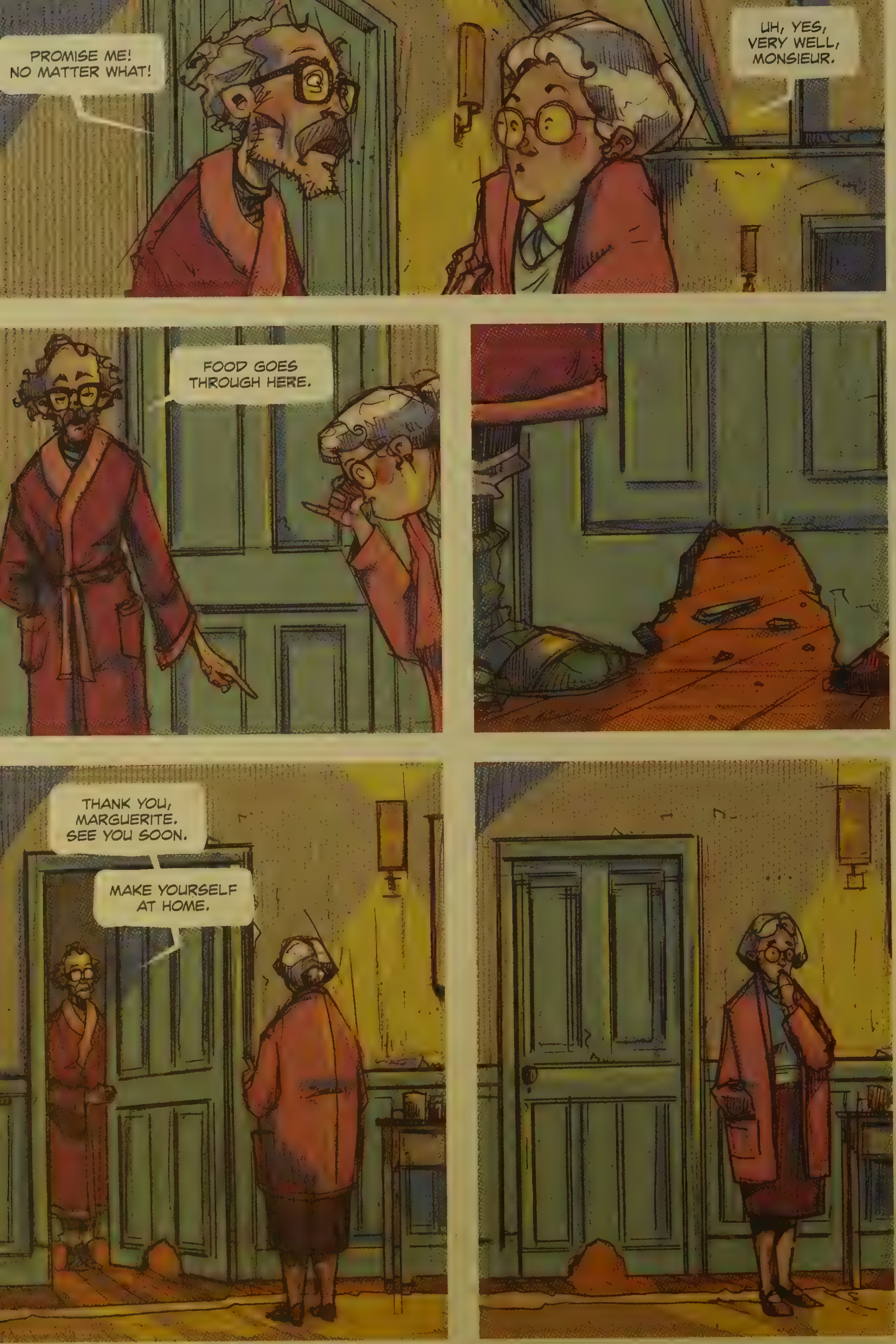

AND FOR SOME REASON...
...I'VE GOTTEN USED TO HAVING THEM AROUND.
NOT LONG AFTER, MARGUERITE SHOWED UP.

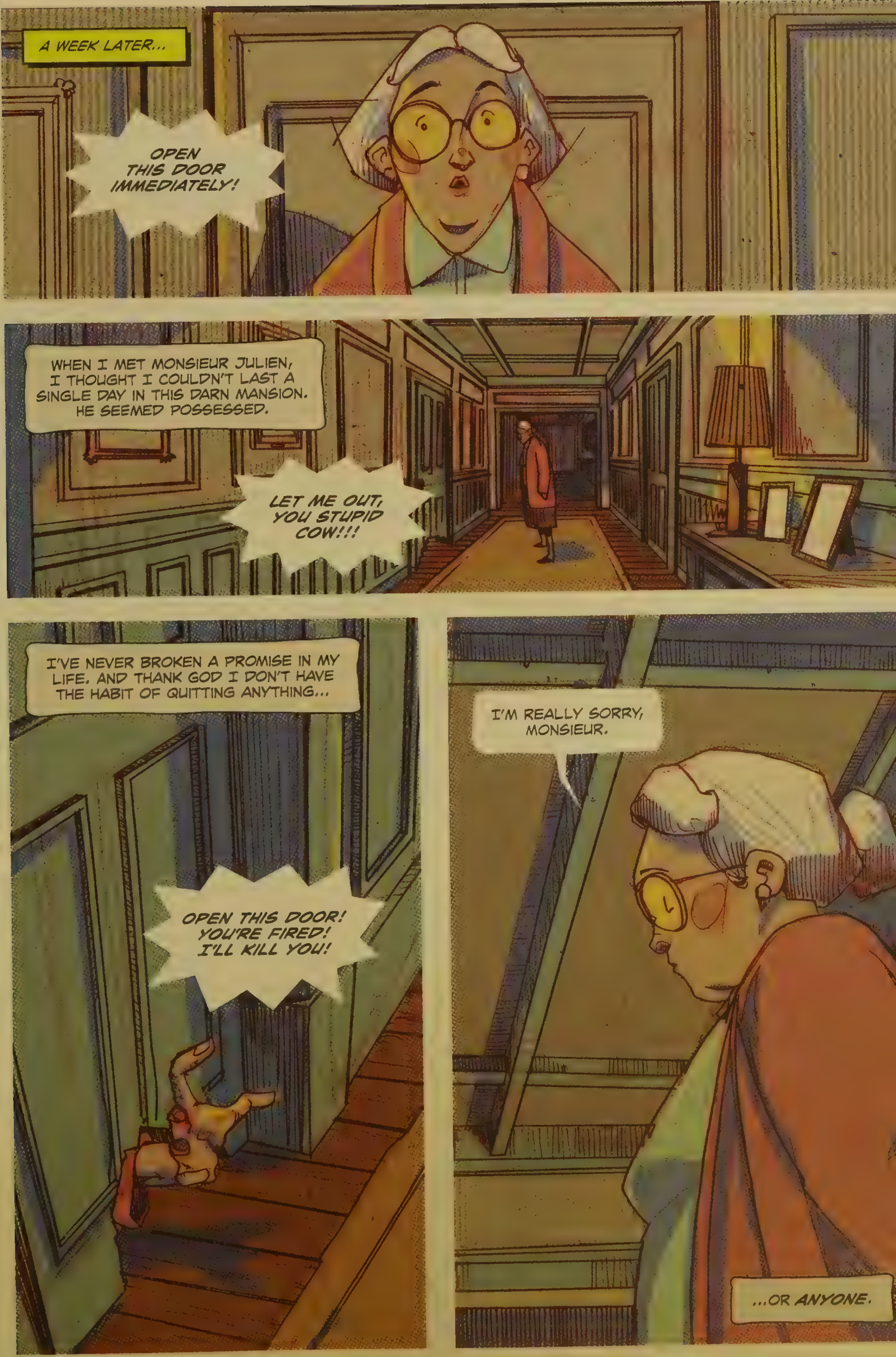
IV

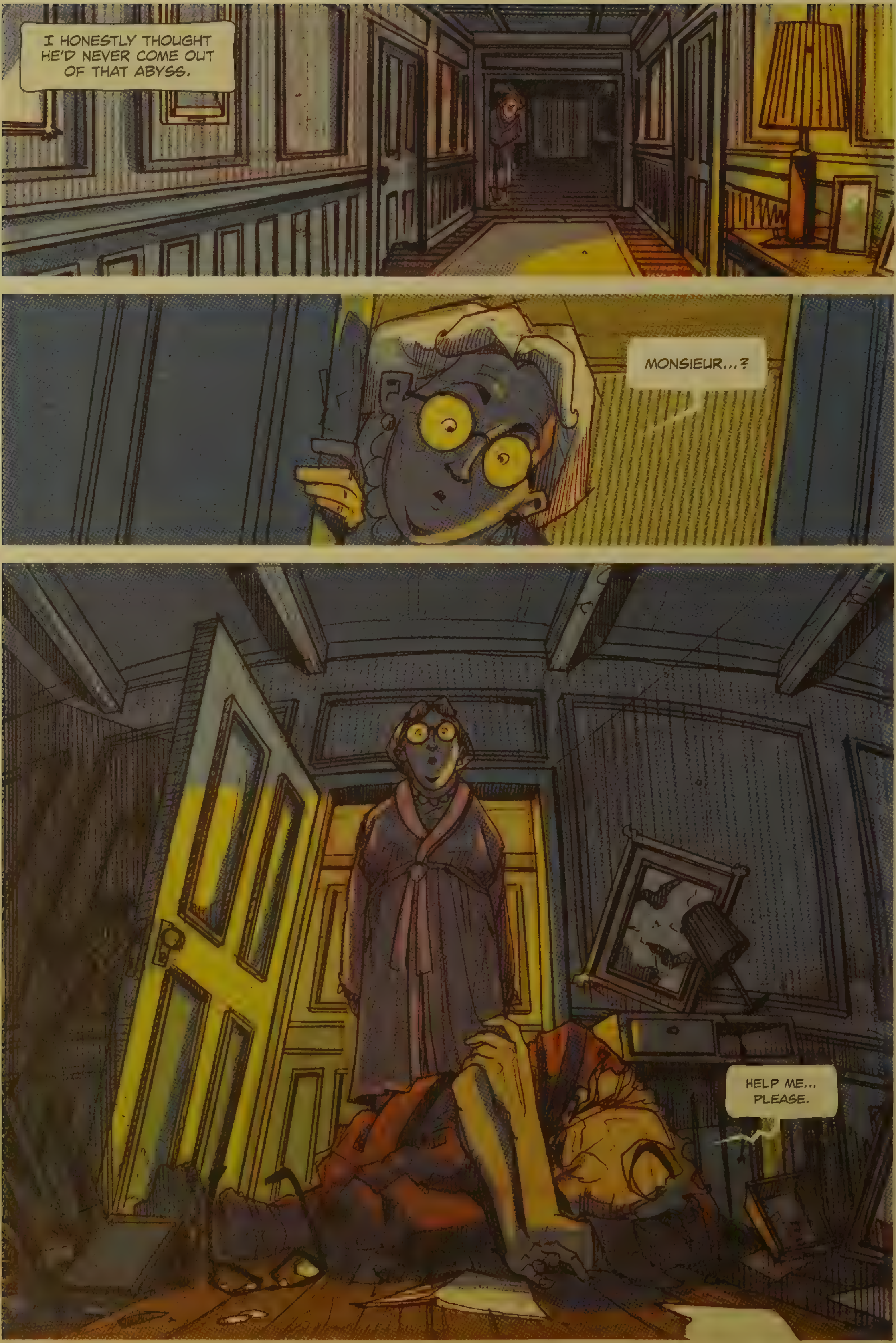
Marguerite Manchon

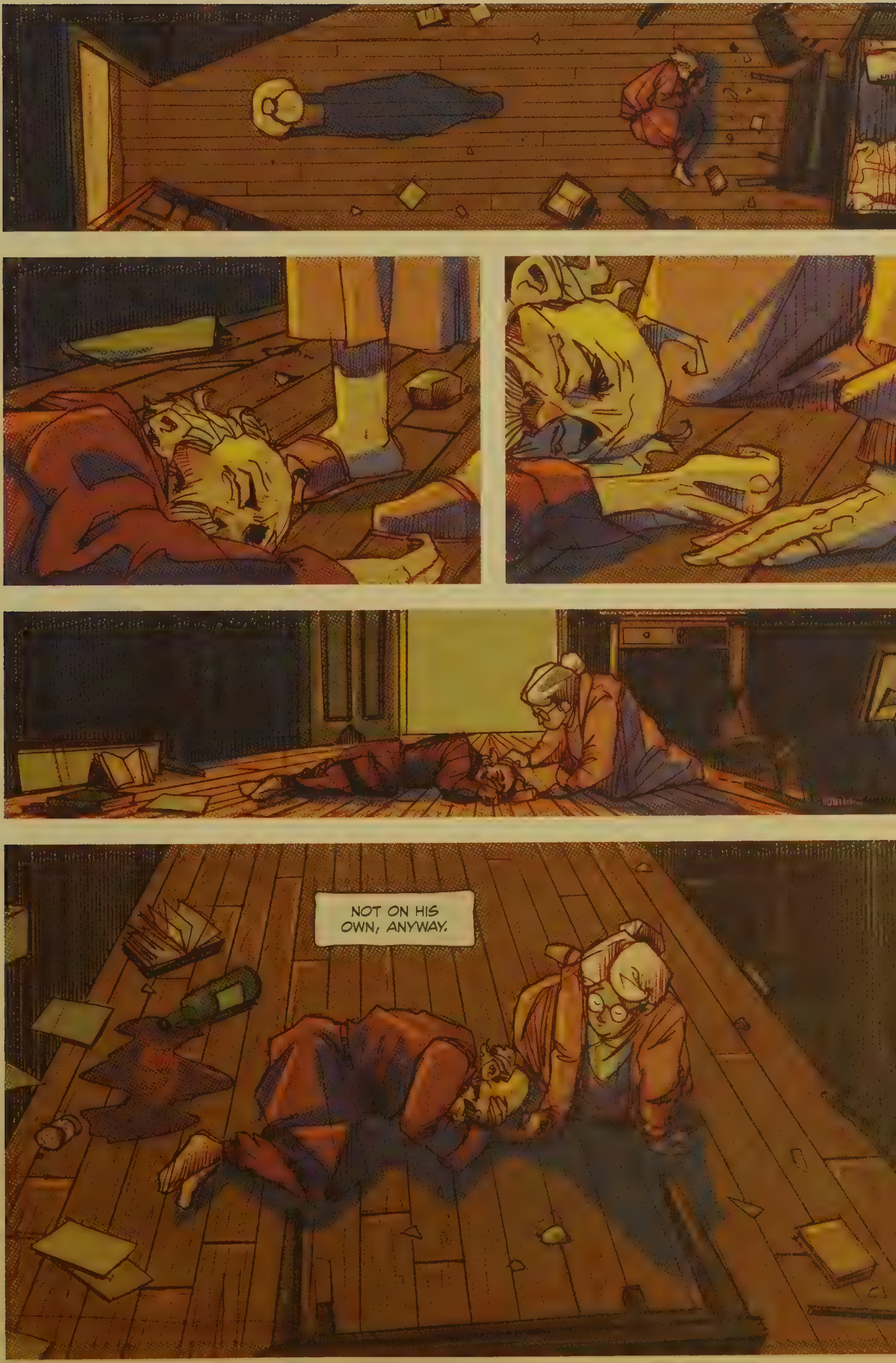

WHAT DO YOU WANT?
MARGUERITE MANCHON, MONSIEUR.
I SAW AN AD...
MARGUERITE! HELLO. JULIEN DUBOIS!
DO COME IN. YOU'RE HIRED!

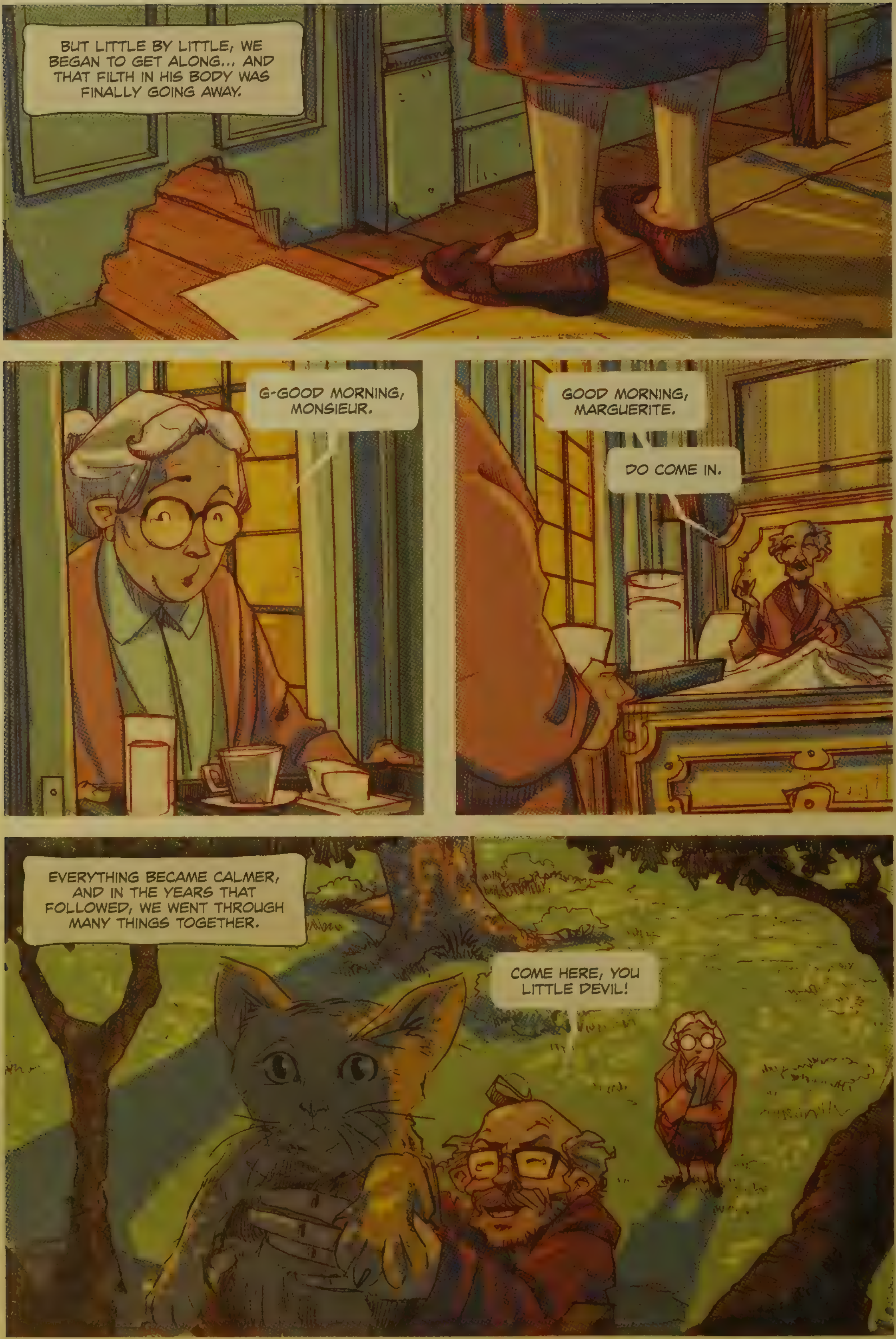

HERE YOU ARE, MARGUERITE.
BUT, MONSIEUR... THIS IS A FORTUNE!
KEEP IT.
ALL I ASK IS SOMETHING IN RETURN.
PROMISE ME, NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS, YOU WON'T LET ME OUT OF THIS ROOM FOR TWO WEEKS.
EVEN IF I BEG YOU, EVEN IF I START THREATENING AND CURSING YOU.
NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS.

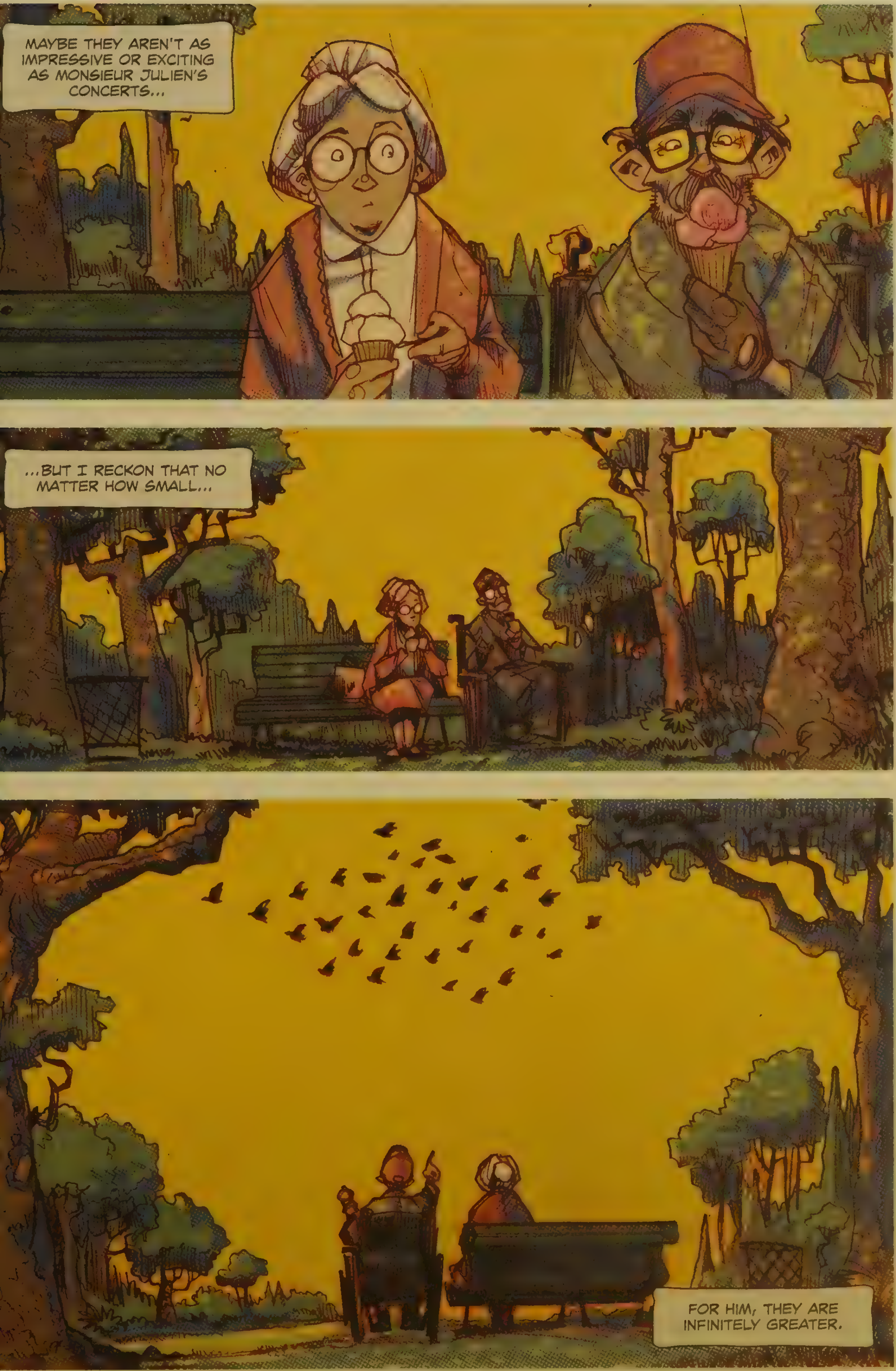

PROMISE ME! NO MATTER WHAT!
UH, YES, VERY WELL, MONSIEUR.
FOOD GOES THROUGH HERE.
THANK YOU, MARGUERITE. SEE YOU SOON.
MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME.

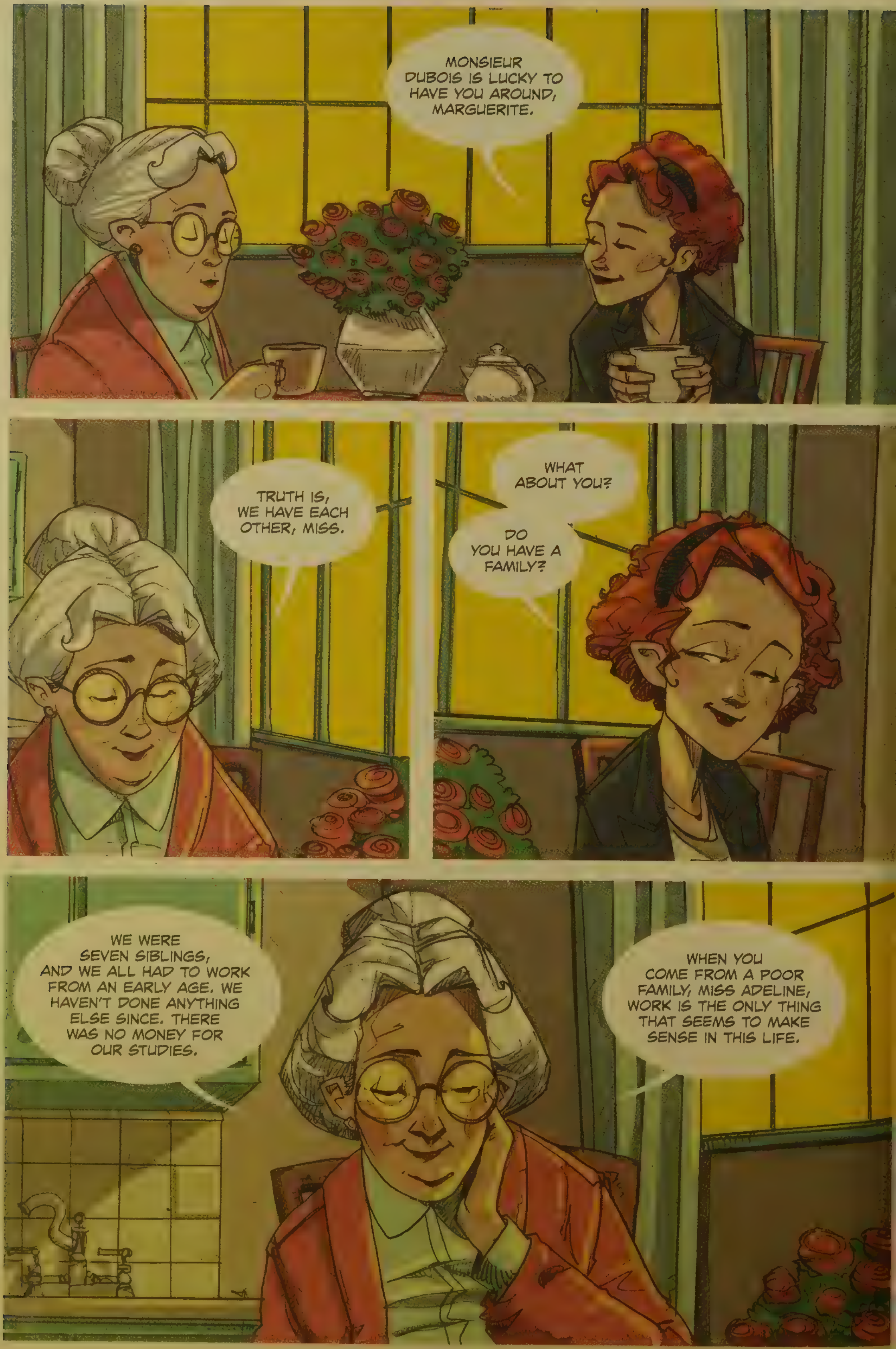

A WEEK LATER...
OPEN THIS DOOR IMMEDIATELY!
WHEN I MET MONSIEUR JULIEN, I THOUGHT I COULDN'T LAST A SINGLE DAY IN THIS DARN MANSION. HE SEEMED POSSESSED.
LET ME OUT, YOU STUPID COW!!!
I'VE NEVER BROKEN A PROMISE IN MY LIFE. AND THANK GOD I DON'T HAVE THE HABIT OF QUITTING ANYTHING...
OPEN THIS DOOR! YOU'RE FIRED! I'LL KILL YOU!
I'M REALLY SORRY, MONSIEUR.
...OR ANYONE.

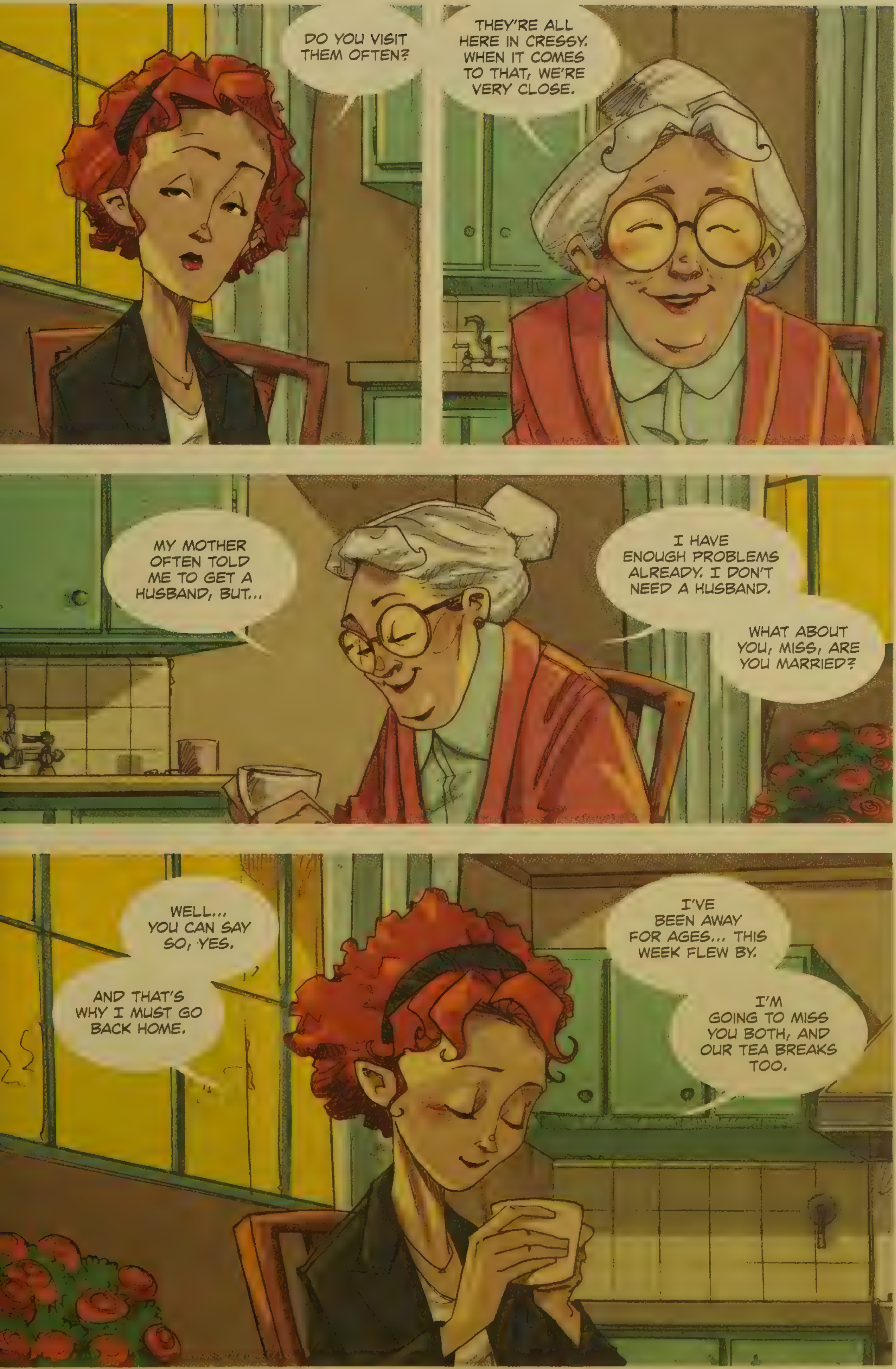

I HONESTLY THOUGHT HE'D NEVER COME OUT OF THAT ABYSS.
MONSIEUR...?
HELP ME... PLEASE.

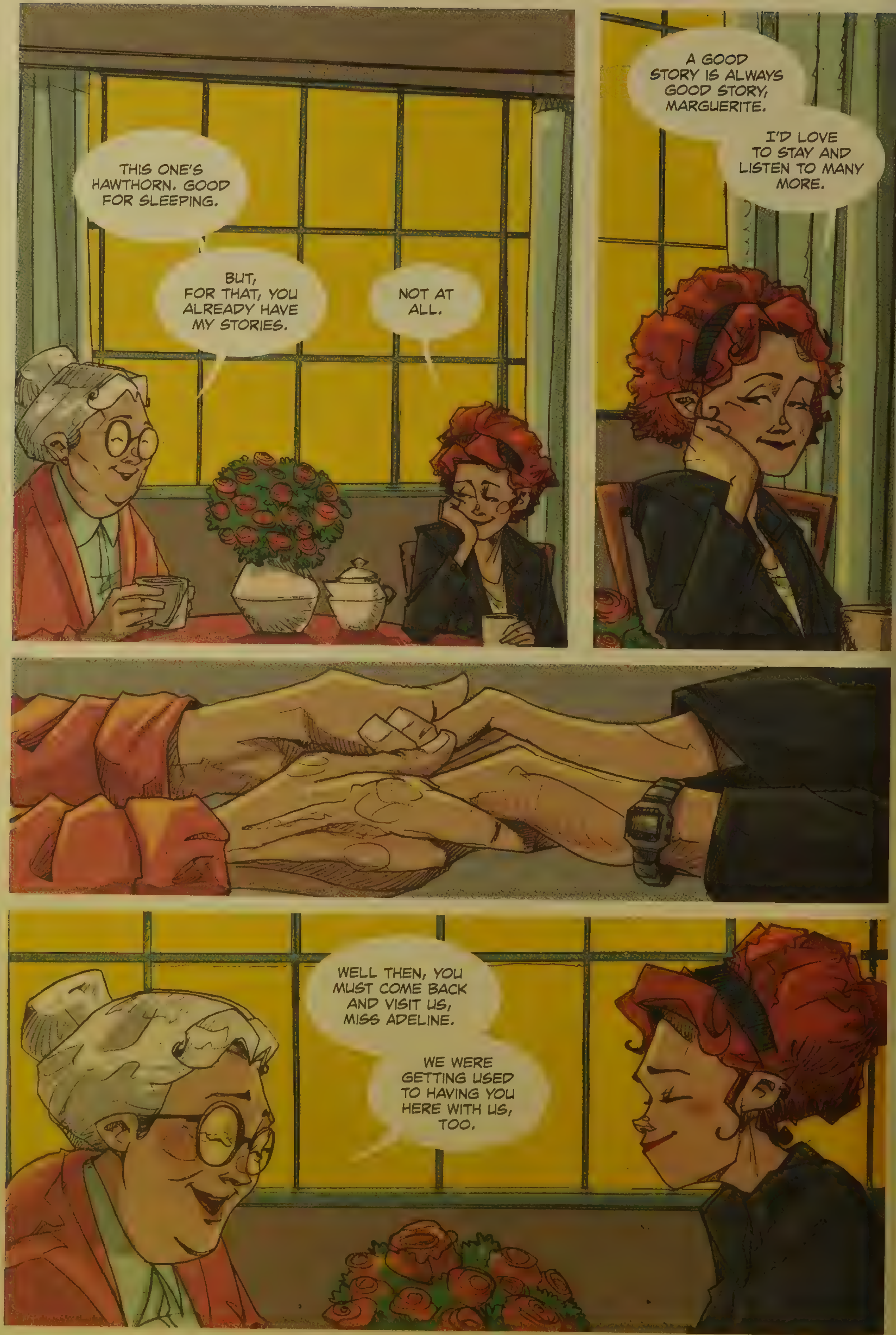

NOT ON HIS OWN, ANYWAY.

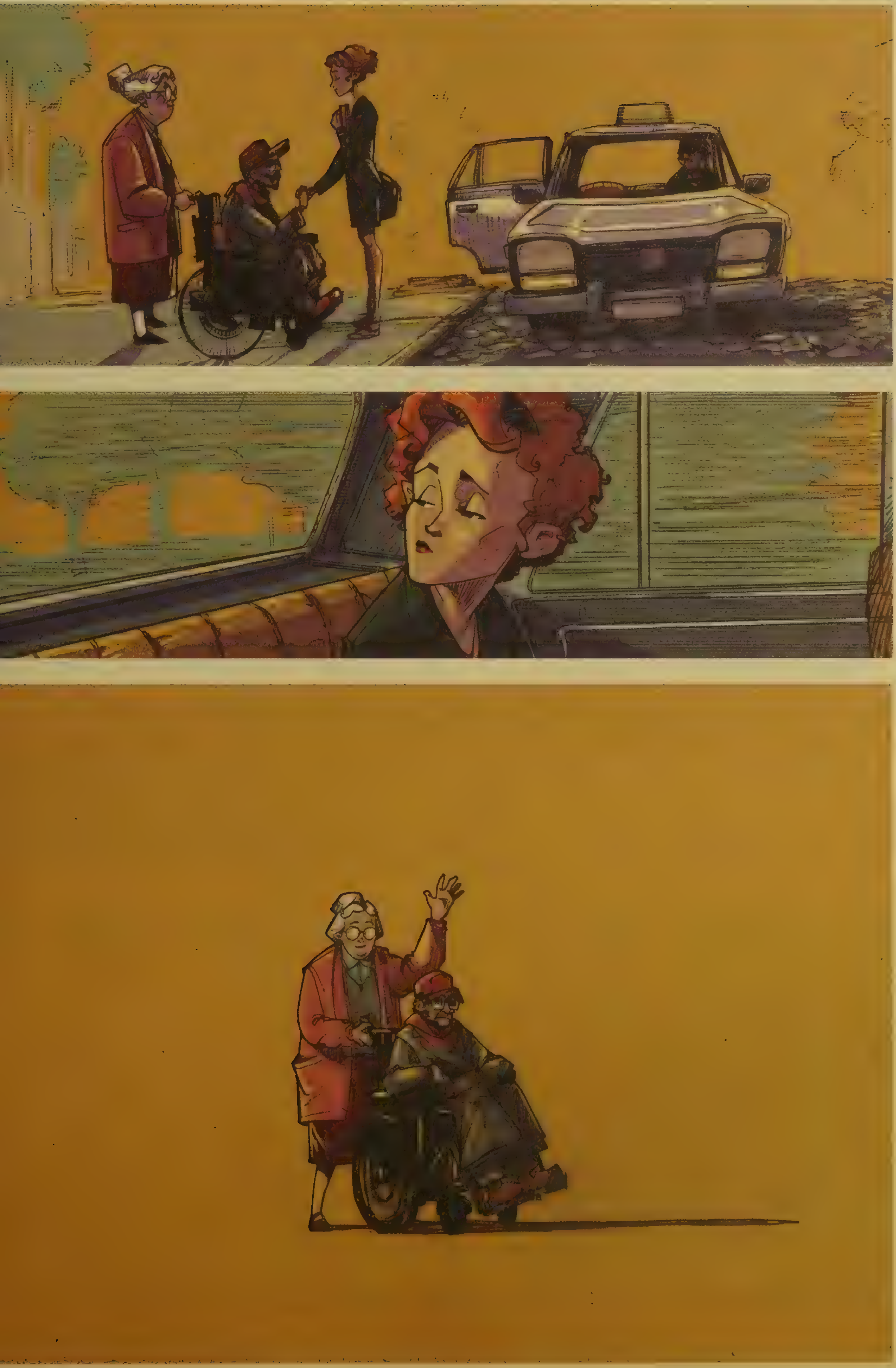

BUT LITTLE BY LITTLE, WE BEGAN TO GET ALONG... AND THAT FILTH IN HIS BODY WAS FINALLY GOING AWAY.
G-GOOD MORNING, MONSIEUR.
GOOD MORNING, MARGUERITE.
DO COME IN.
EVERYTHING BECAME CALMER, AND IN THE YEARS THAT FOLLOWED, WE WENT THROUGH MANY THINGS TOGETHER.
COME HERE, YOU LITTLE DEVIL!

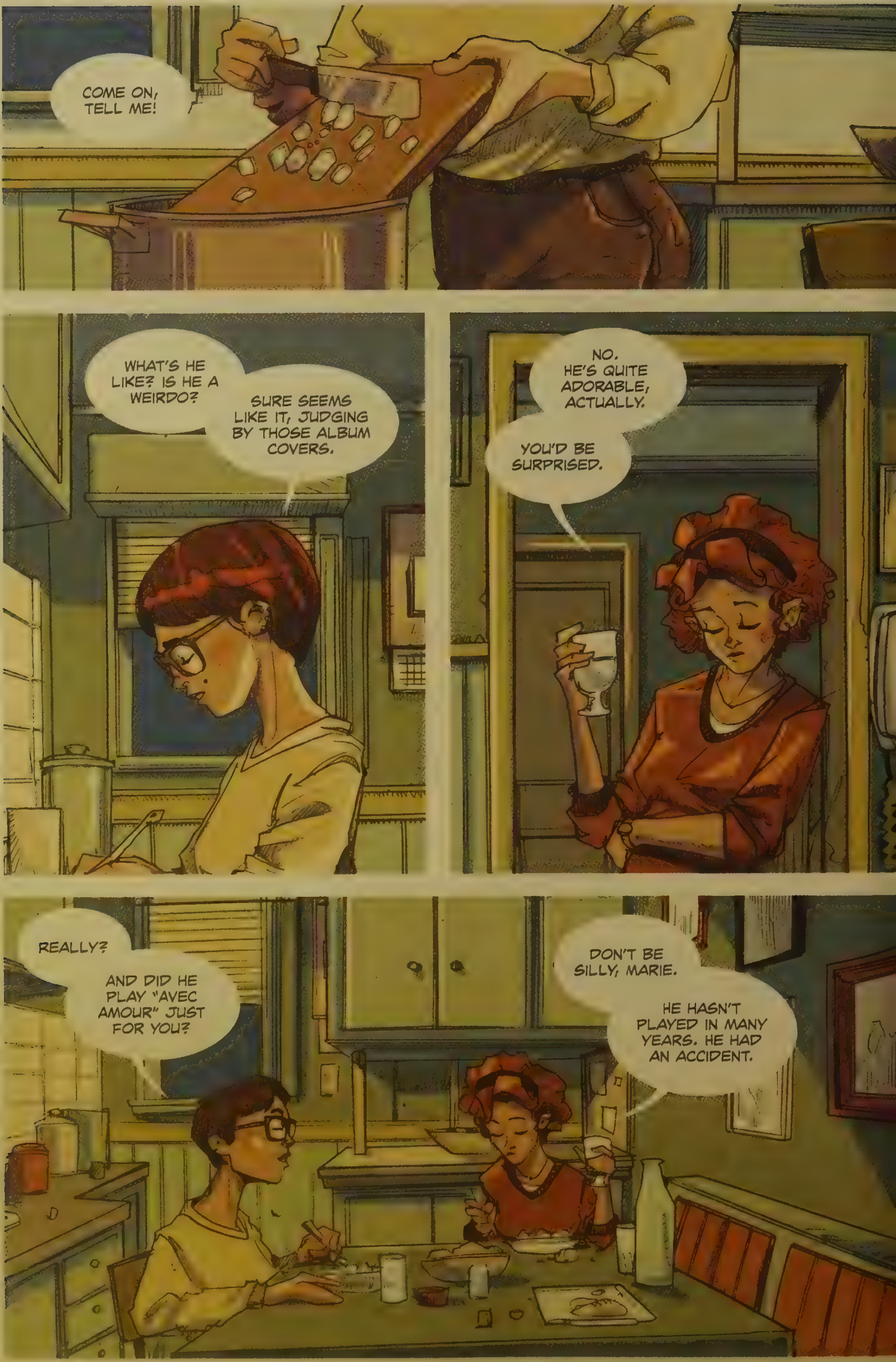

MAYBE THEY AREN'T AS IMPRESSIVE OR EXCITING AS MONSIEUR JULIEN'S CONCERTS...
...BUT I RECKON THAT NO MATTER HOW SMALL...
FOR HIM, THEY ARE INFINITELY GREATER.

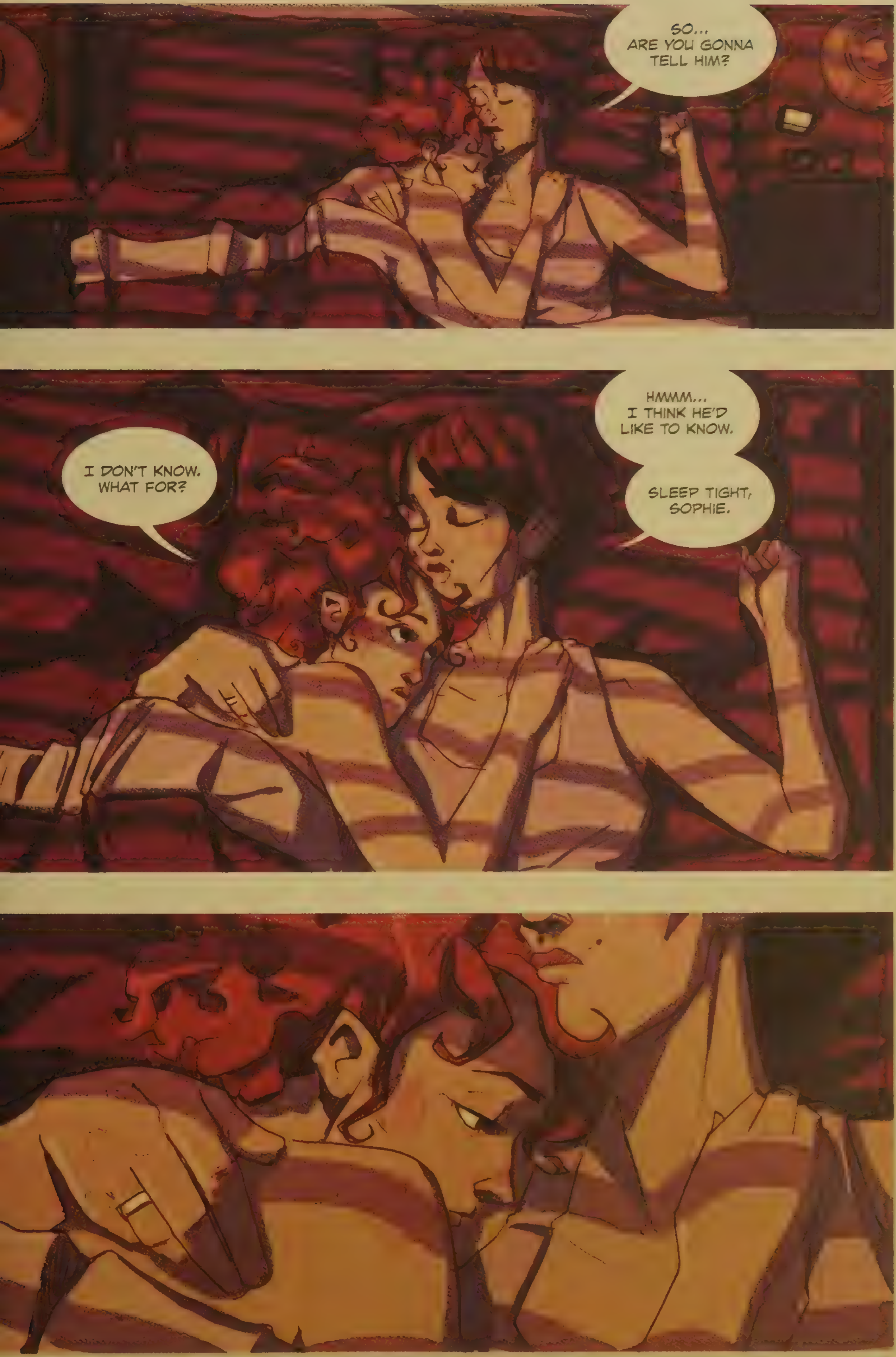

MONSIEUR DUBOIS IS LUCKY TO HAVE YOU AROUND, MARGUERITE.
TRUTH IS, WE HAVE EACH OTHER, MISS.
WHAT ABOUT YOU?
DO YOU HAVE A FAMILY?
WE WERE SEVEN SIBLINGS, AND WE ALL HAD TO WORK FROM AN EARLY AGE. WE HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING ELSE SINCE. THERE WAS NO MONEY FOR OUR STUDIES.
WHEN YOU COME FROM A POOR FAMILY, MISS ADELINE, WORK IS THE ONLY THING THAT SEEMS TO MAKE SENSE IN THIS LIFE.


DO YOU VISIT THEM OFTEN?
THEY'RE ALL HERE IN CRESSY. WHEN IT COMES TO THAT, WE'RE VERY CLOSE.
MY MOTHER OFTEN TOLD ME TO GET A HUSBAND, BUT...
I HAVE ENOUGH PROBLEMS ALREADY. I DON'T NEED A HUSBAND.
WHAT ABOUT YOU, MISS, ARE YOU MARRIED?
WELL... YOU CAN SAY SO, YES.
AND THAT'S WHY I MUST GO BACK HOME.
I'VE BEEN AWAY FOR AGES... THIS WEEK FLEW BY.
I'M GOING TO MISS YOU BOTH, AND OUR TEA BREAKS TOO.


THIS ONE'S HAWTHORN. GOOD FOR SLEEPING.
BUT, FOR THAT, YOU ALREADY HAVE MY STORIES.
NOT AT ALL.
A GOOD STORY IS ALWAYS GOOD STORY, MARGUERITE.
I'D LOVE TO STAY AND LISTEN TO MANY MORE.
WELL THEN, YOU MUST COME BACK AND VISIT US, MISS ADELINE.
WE WERE GETTING USED TO HAVING YOU HERE WITH US, TOO.

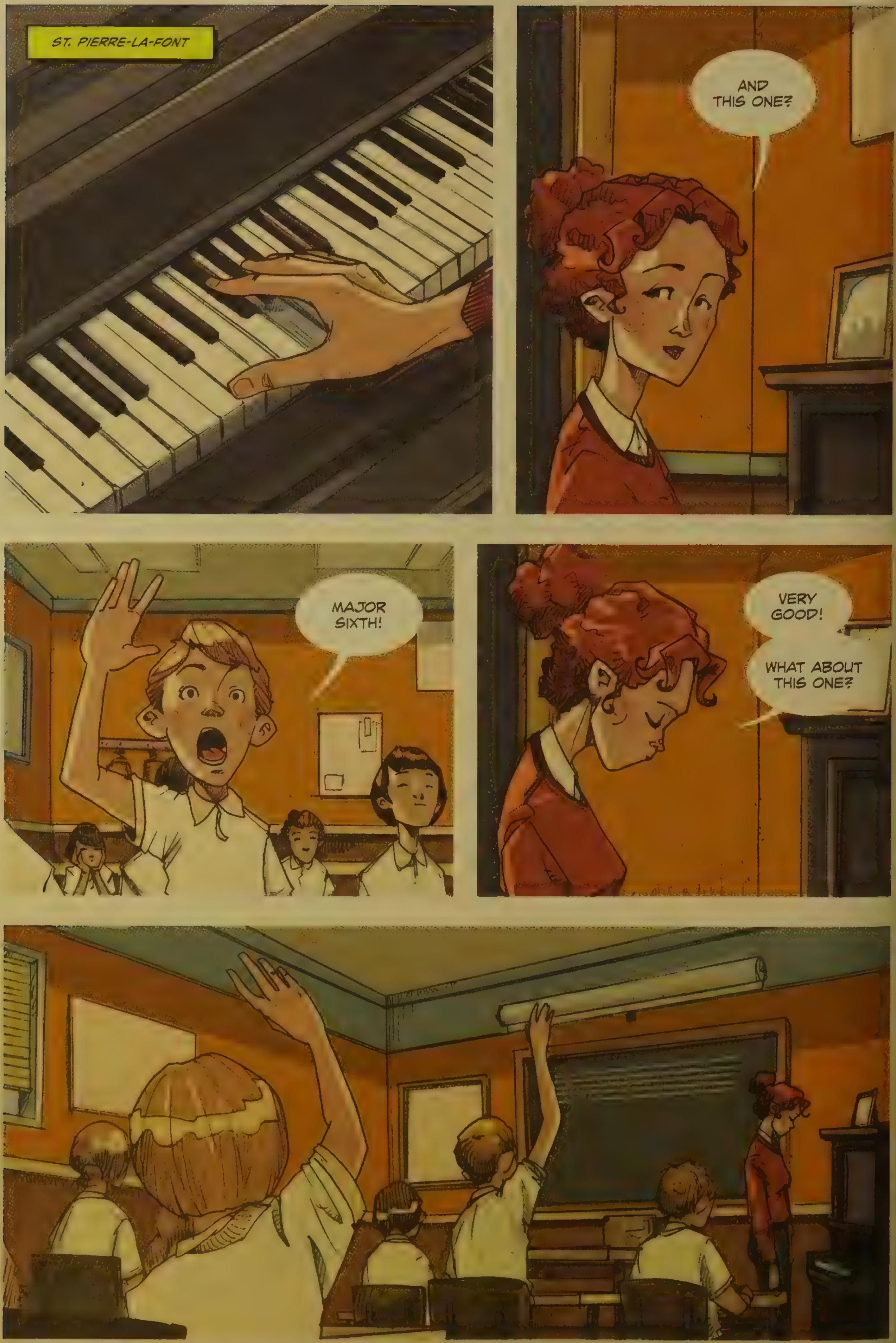


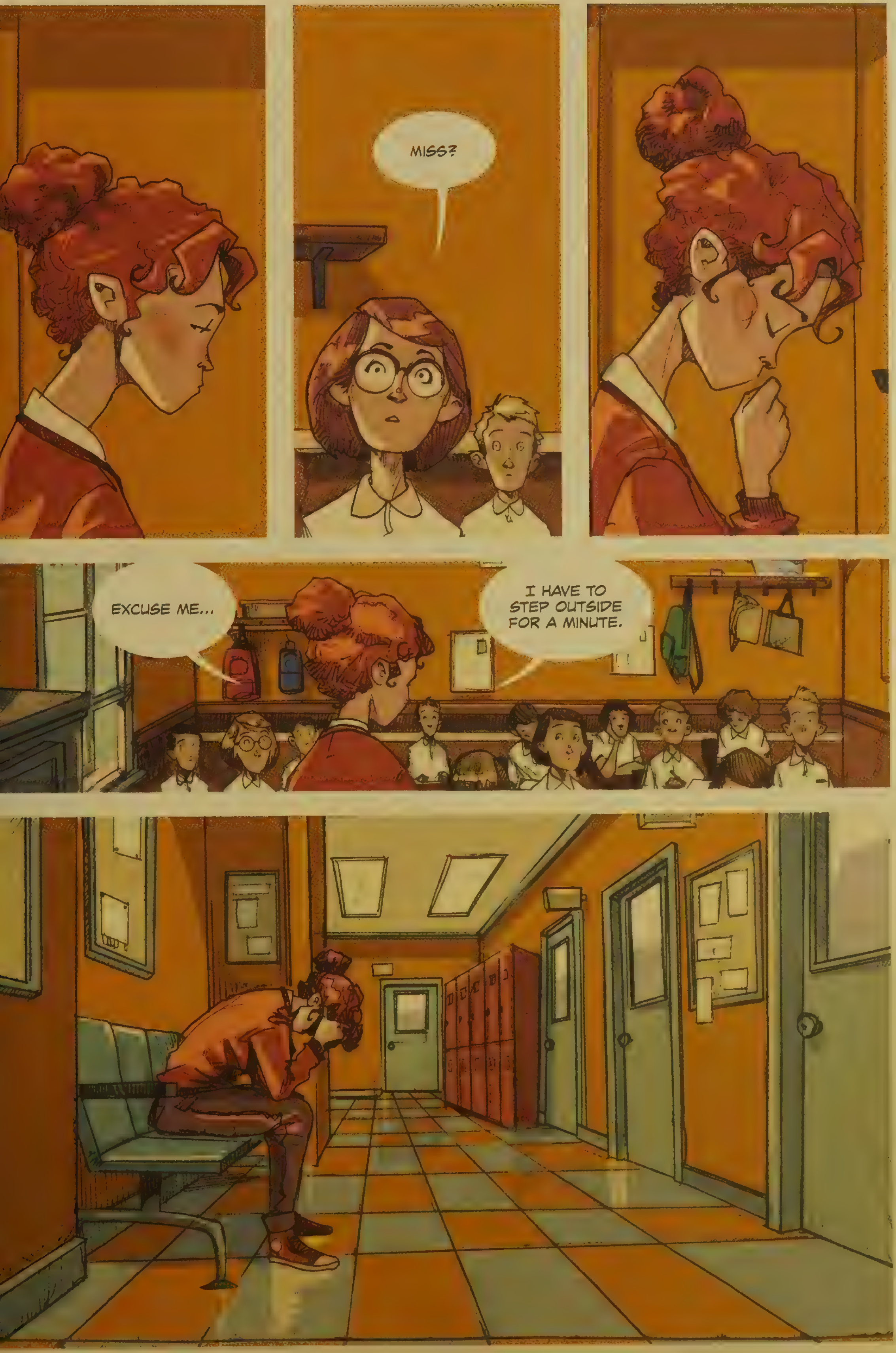

COME ON, TELL ME!
WHAT'S HE LIKE? IS HE A WEIRDO?
SURE SEEMS LIKE IT, JUDGING BY THOSE ALBUM COVERS.
NO. HE'S QUITE ADORABLE, ACTUALLY.
YOU'D BE SURPRISED.
REALLY?
AND DID HE PLAY "AVEC AMOUR" JUST FOR YOU?
DON'T BE SILLY, MARIE.
HE HASN'T PLAYED IN MANY YEARS. HE HAD AN ACCIDENT.

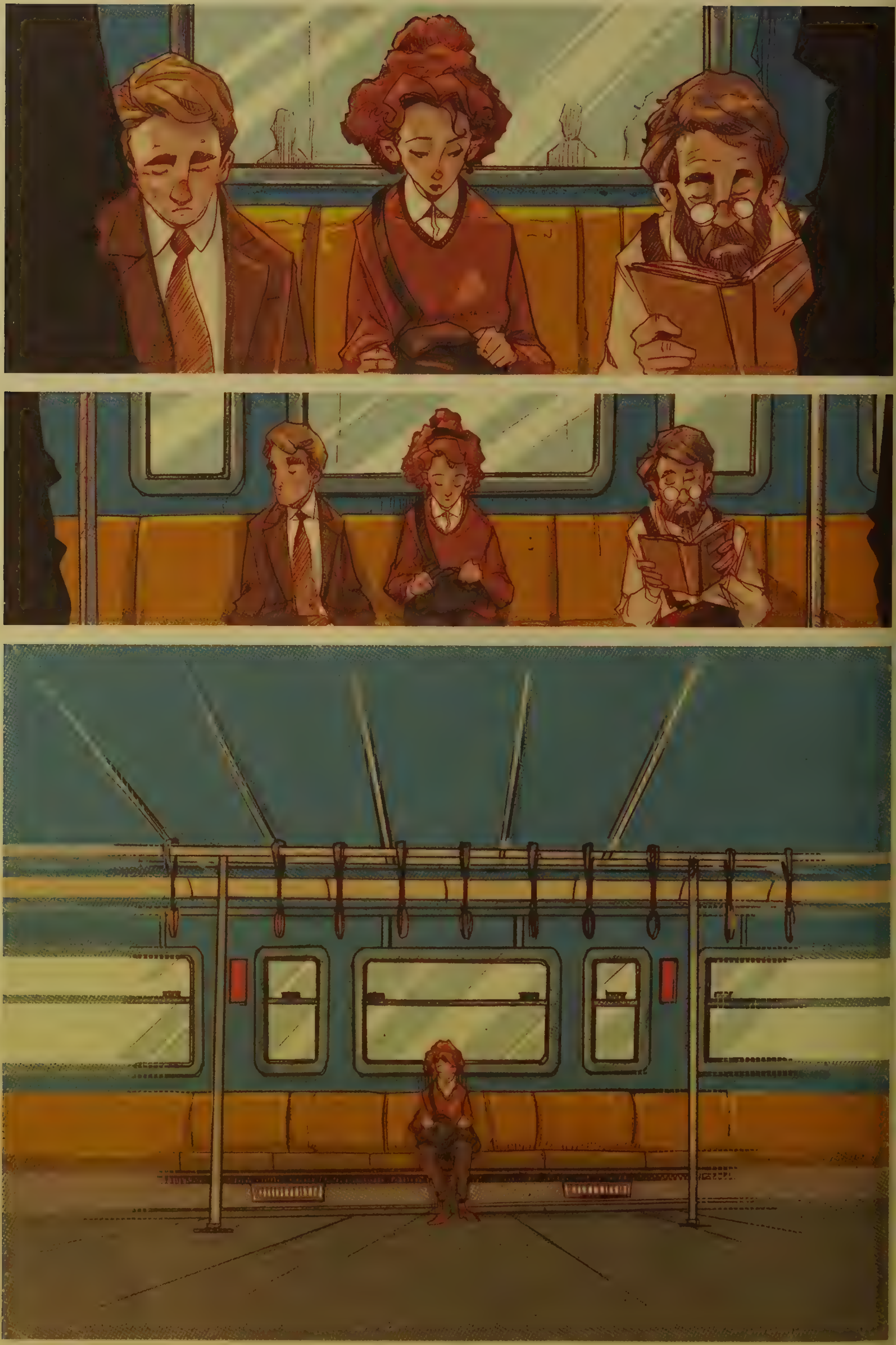

SO... ARE YOU GONNA TELL HIM?
I DON'T KNOW. WHAT FOR?
HMMM... I THINK HE'D LIKE TO KNOW.
SLEEP TIGHT, SOPHIE.

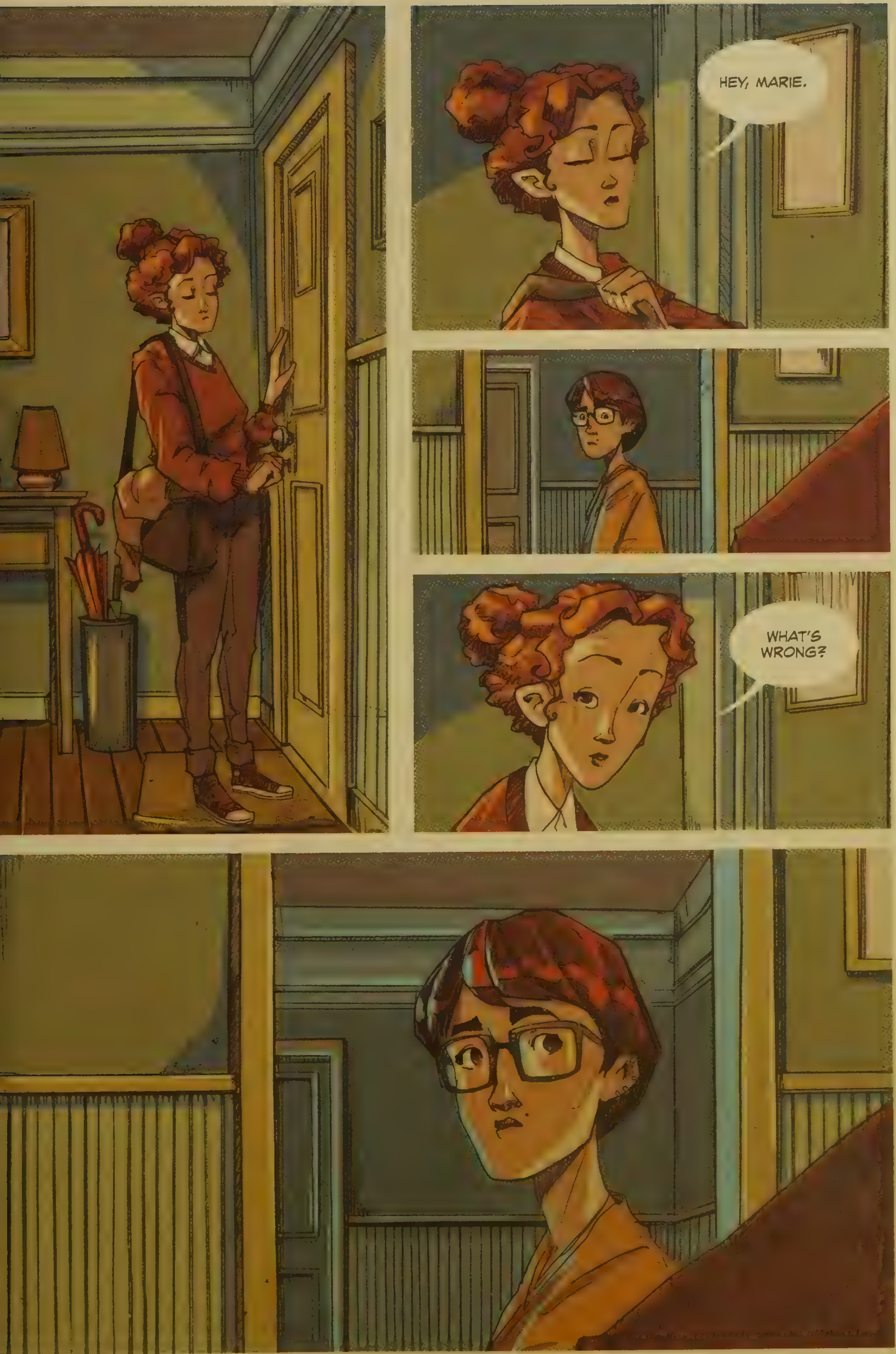
V

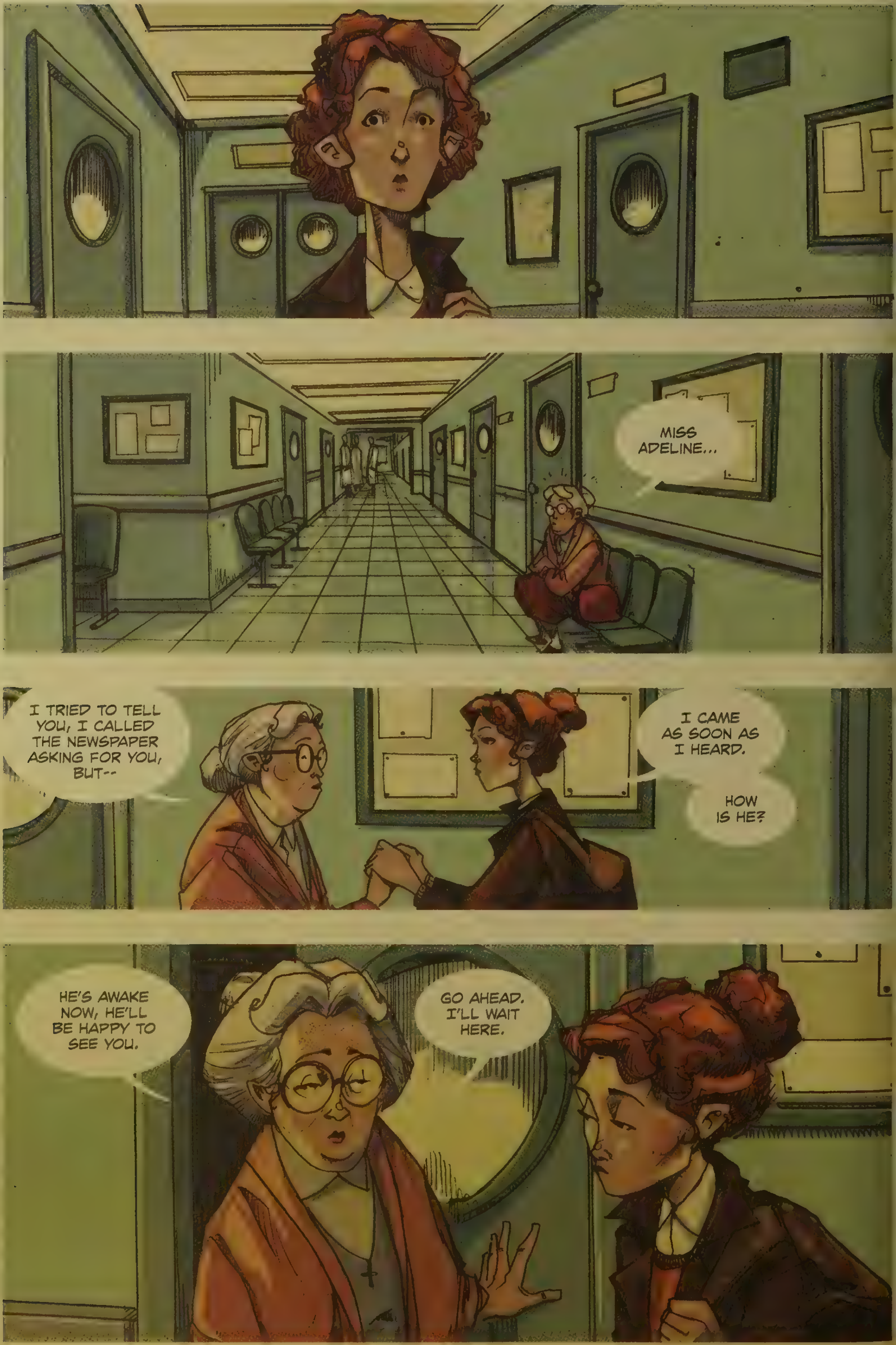
Sophie Landrain

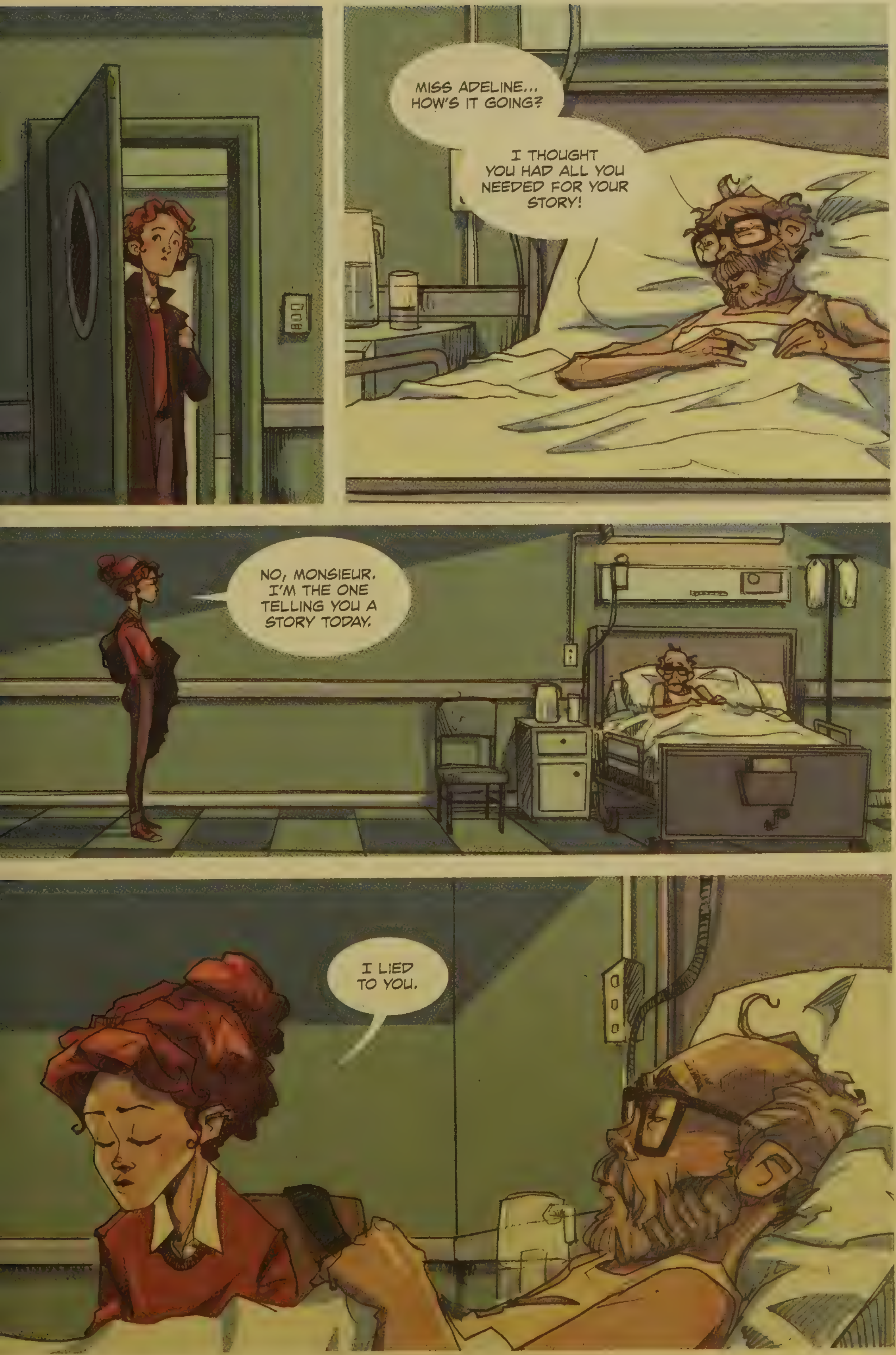

ST. PIERRE-LA-FONT
AND THIS ONE?
MAJOR SIXTH!
VERY GOOD!
WHAT ABOUT THIS ONE?

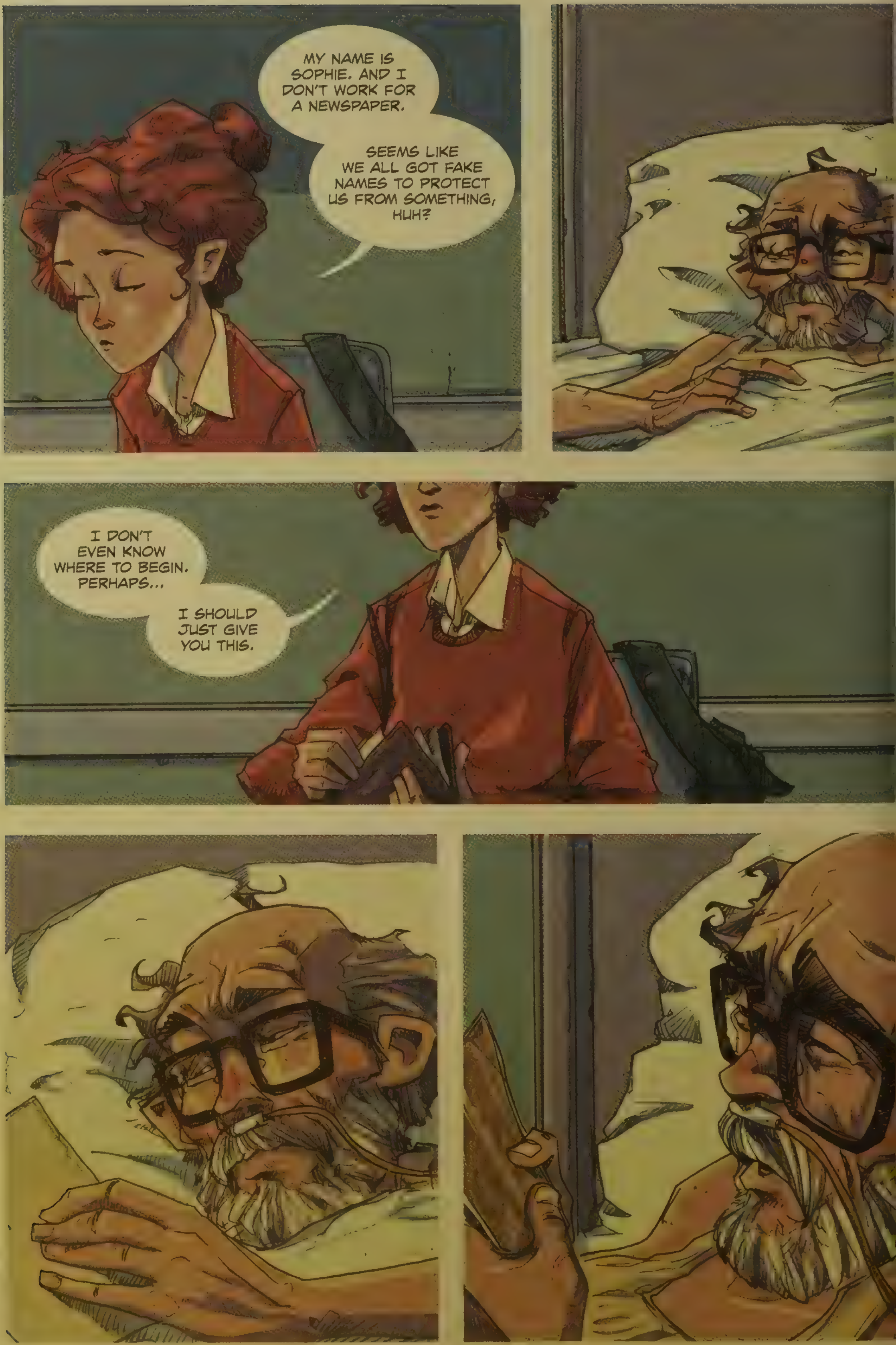

MISS?
EXCUSE ME...
I HAVE TO STEP OUTSIDE FOR A MINUTE.

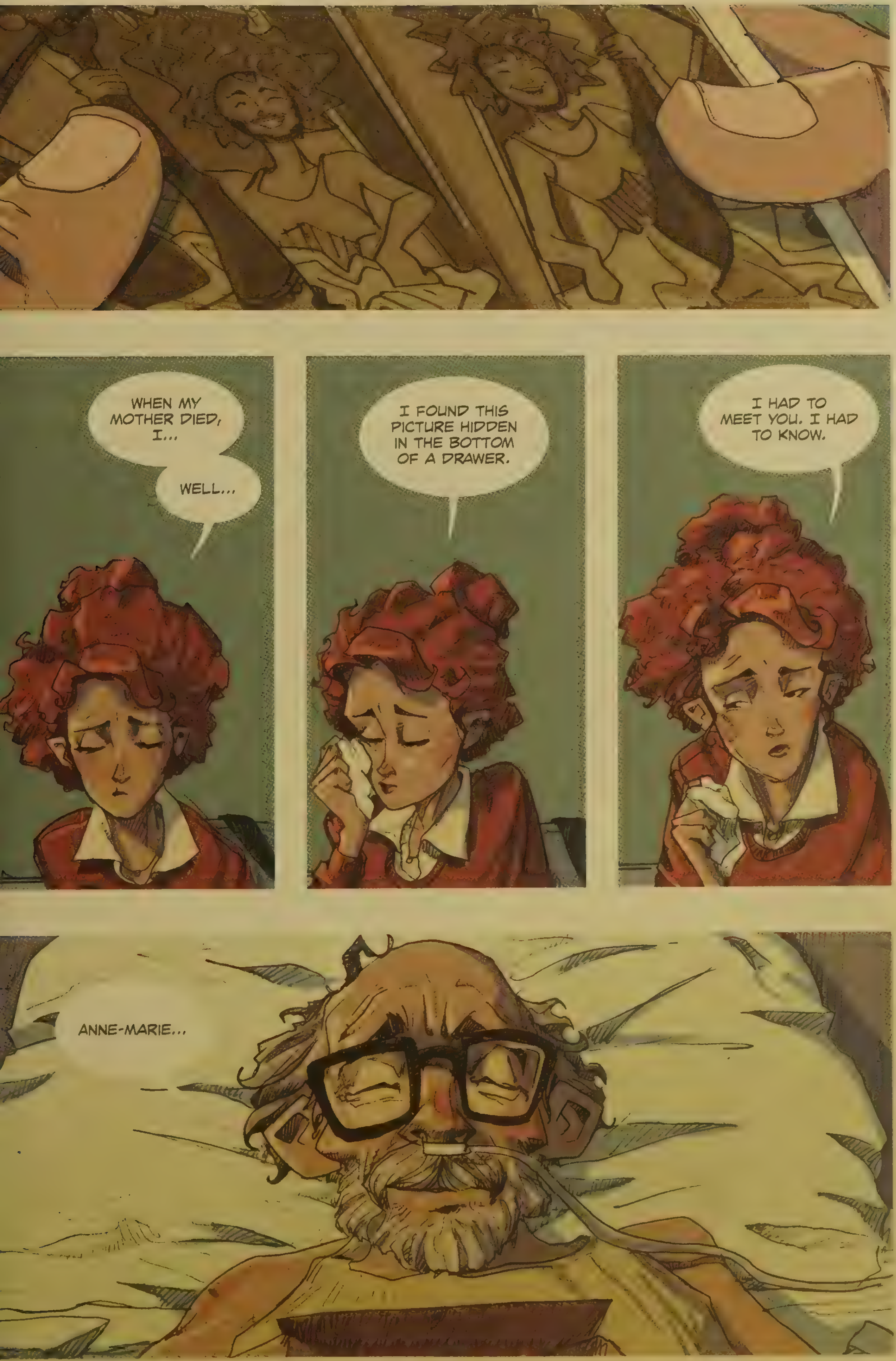


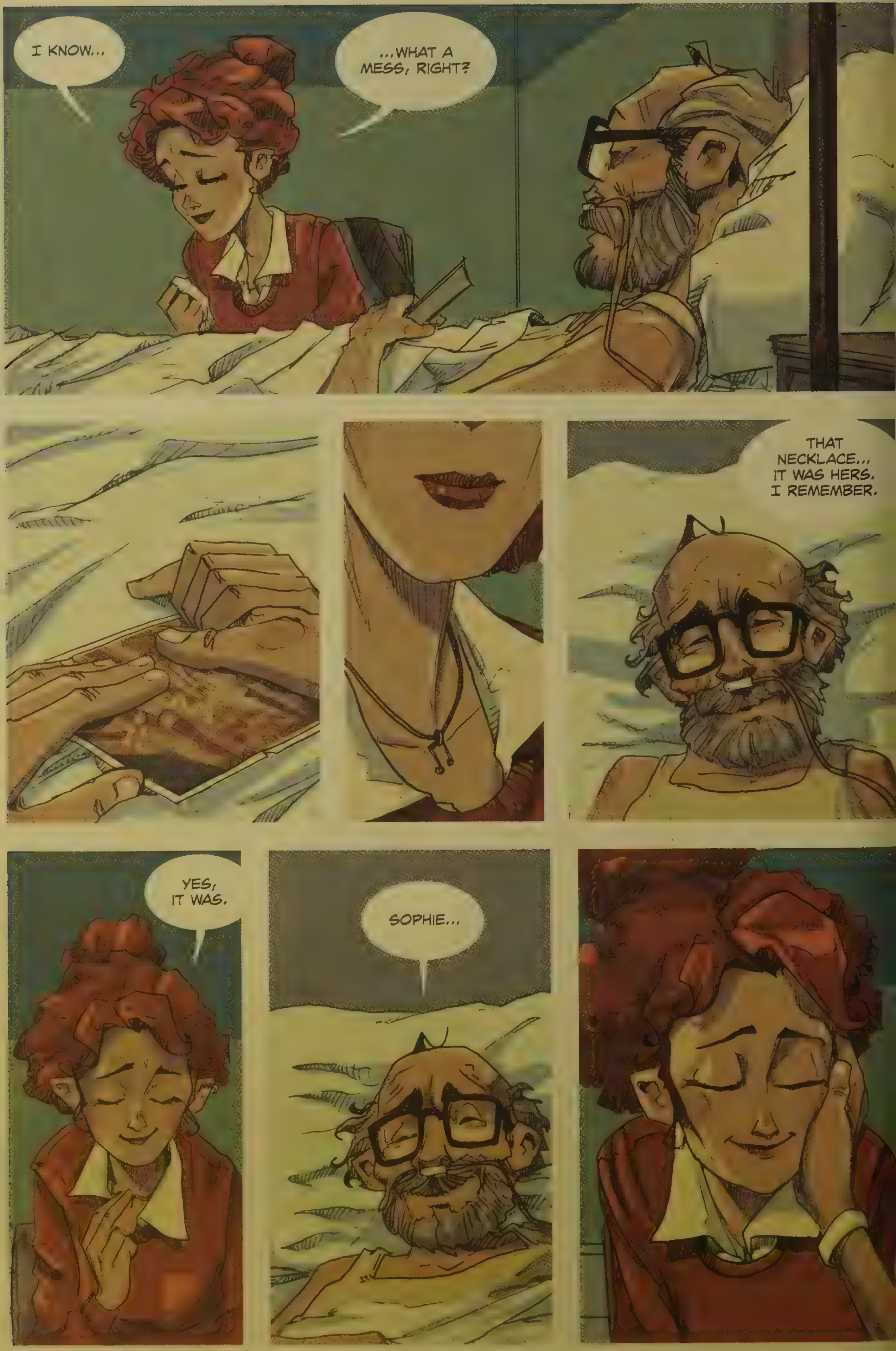

HEY, MARIE.
WHAT'S WRONG?

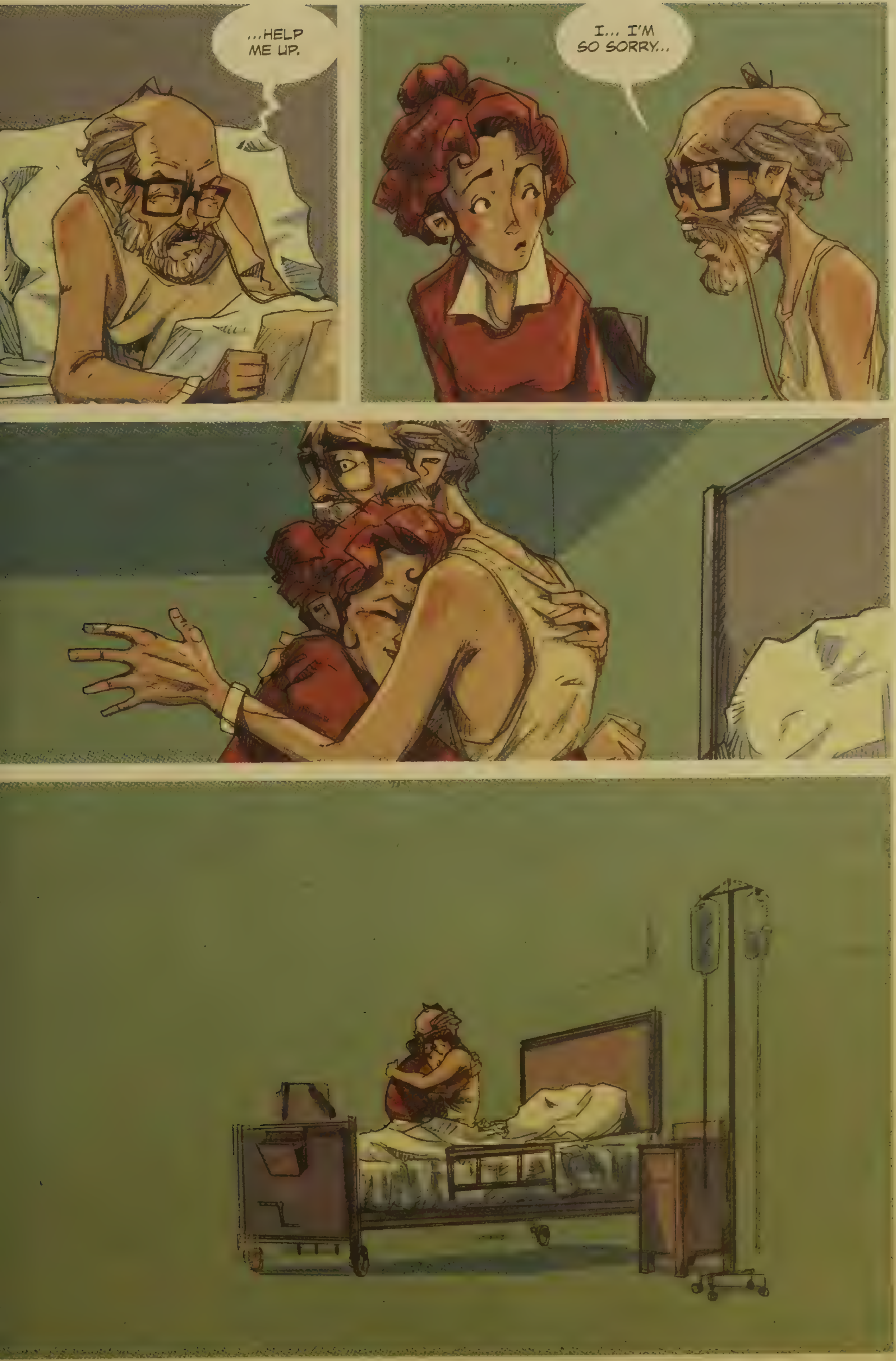

MISS ADELINE...
I TRIED TO TELL YOU, I CALLED THE NEWSPAPER ASKING FOR YOU, BUT--
I CAME AS SOON AS I HEARD.
HOW IS HE?
HE'S AWAKE NOW, HE'LL BE HAPPY TO SEE YOU.
GO AHEAD. I'LL WAIT HERE.

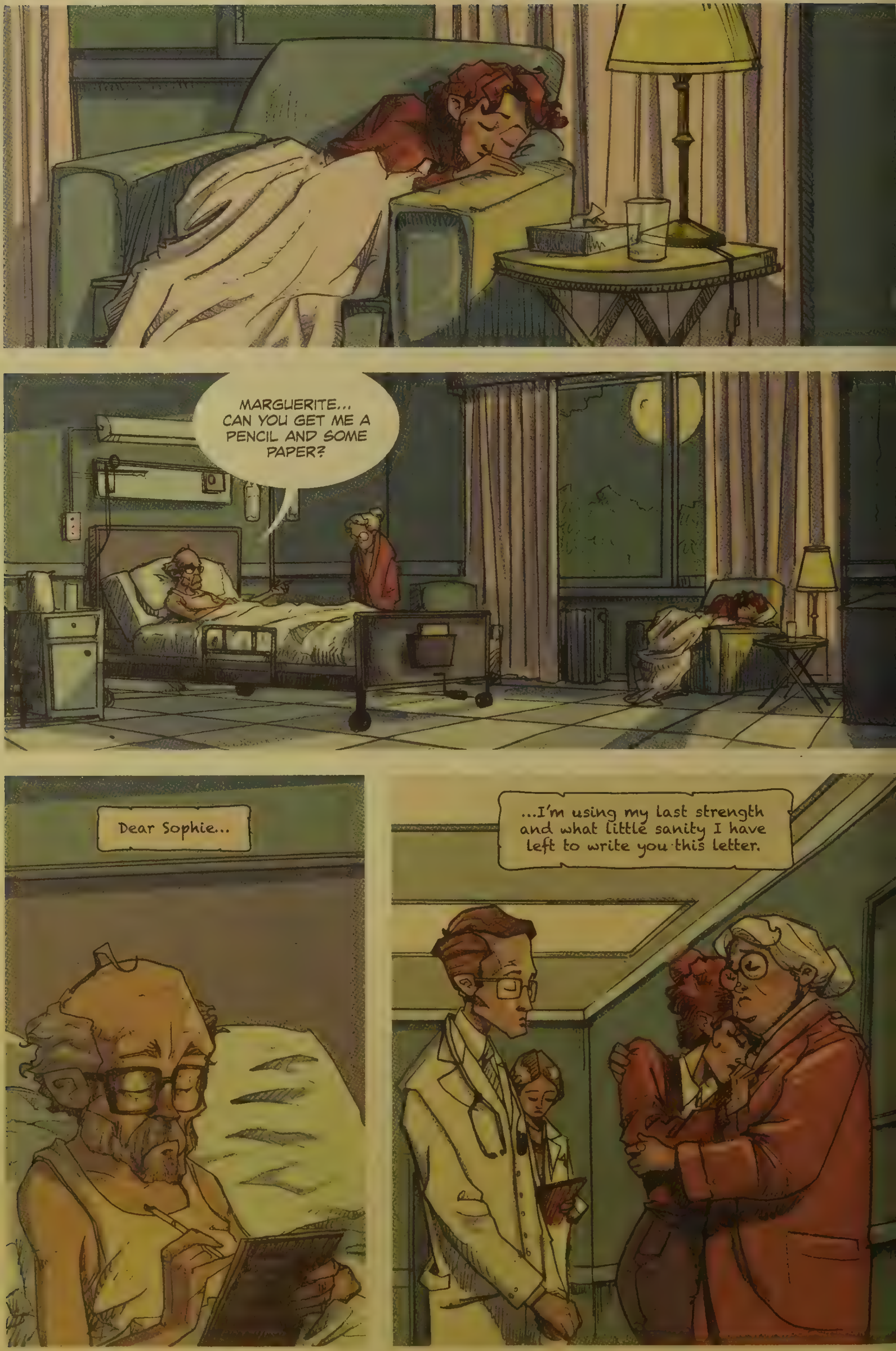

MISS ADELINE... HOW'S IT GOING?
I THOUGHT YOU HAD ALL YOU NEEDED FOR YOUR STORY!
NO, MONSIEUR. I'M THE ONE TELLING YOU A STORY TODAY.
I LIED TO YOU.

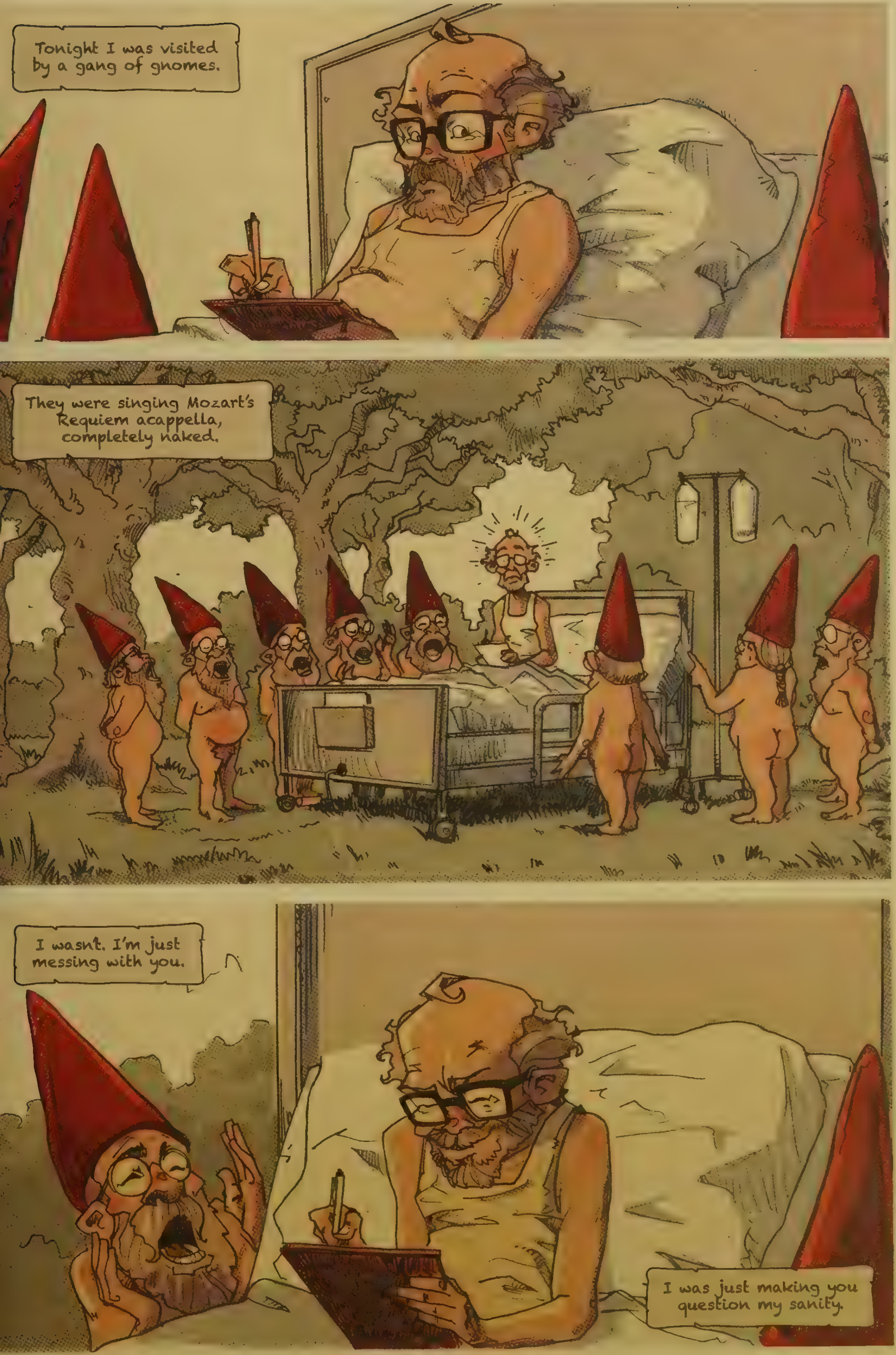

MY NAME IS SOPHIE. AND I DON'T WORK FOR A NEWSPAPER.
SEEMS LIKE WE ALL GOT FAKE NAMES TO PROTECT US FROM SOMETHING, HUH?
I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE TO BEGIN. PERHAPS...
I SHOULD JUST GIVE YOU THIS.

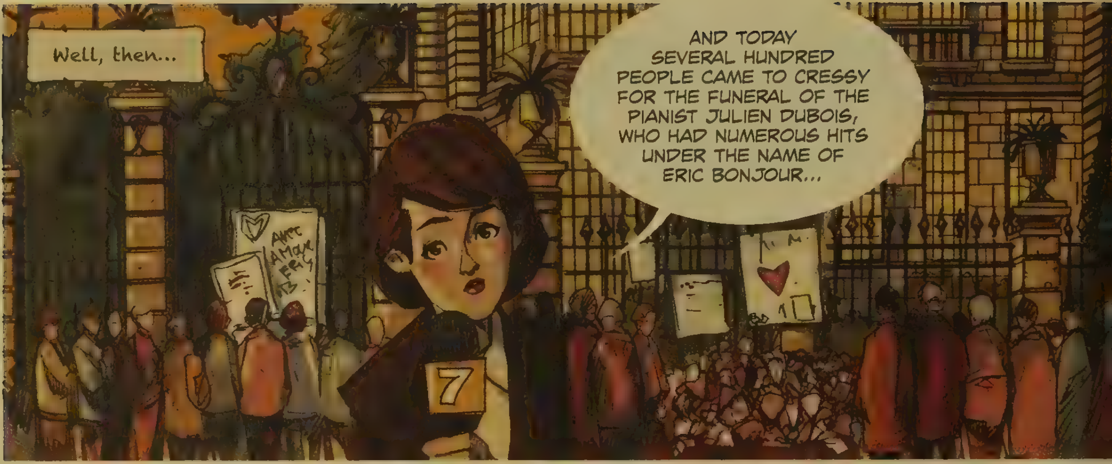

WHEN MY MOTHER DIED, I...
WELL...
I FOUND THIS PICTURE HIDDEN IN THE BOTTOM OF A DRAWER.
I HAD TO MEET YOU. I HAD TO KNOW.
ANNE-MARIE...

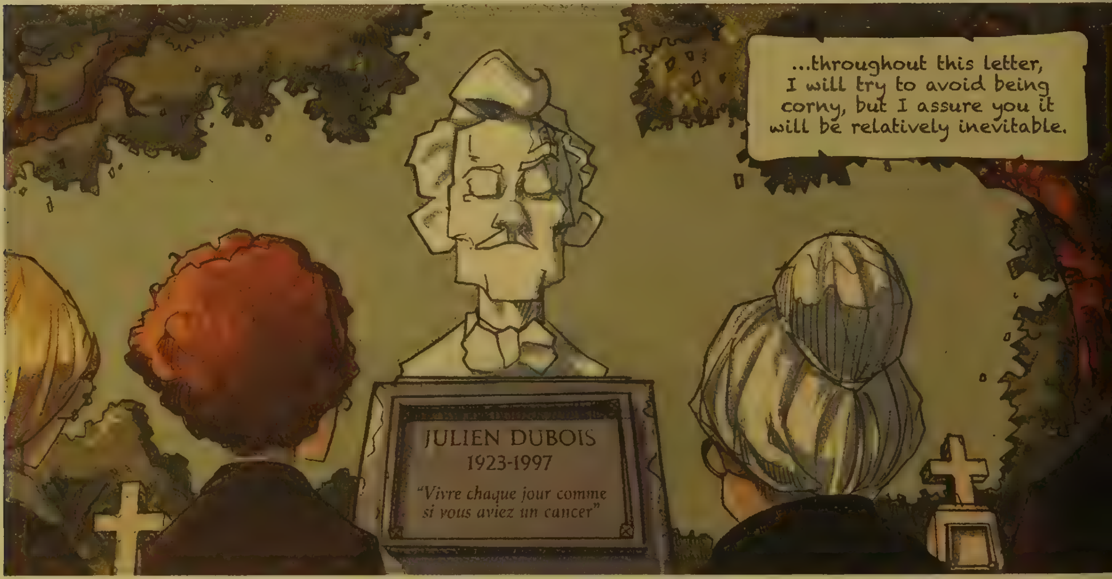

I KNOW...
...WHAT A MESS, RIGHT?
THAT NECKLACE... IT WAS HERS. I REMEMBER.
YES, IT WAS.
SOPHIE...

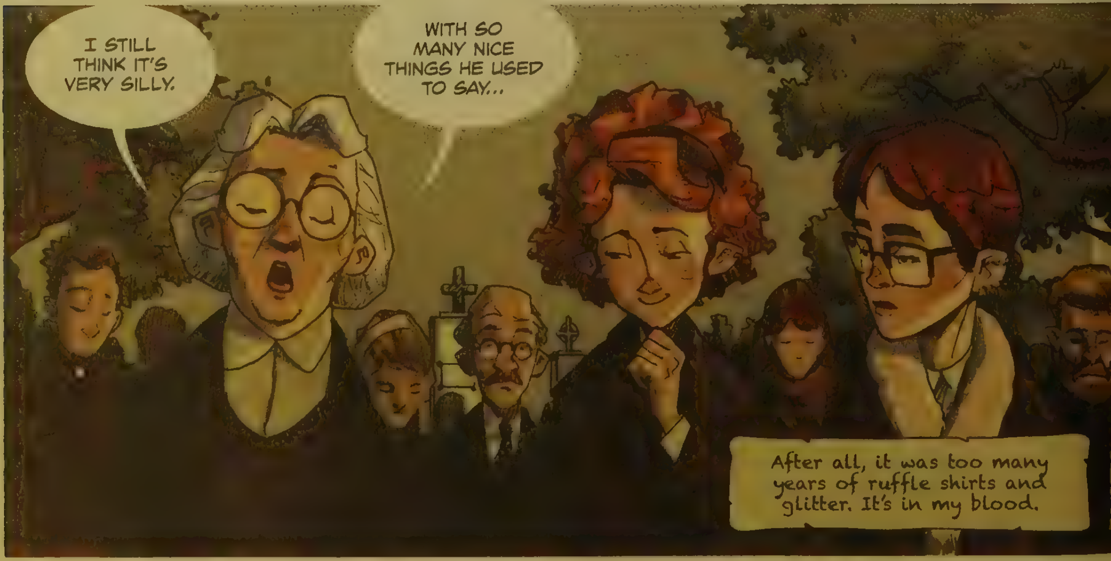

...HELP ME UP.
I... I'M SO SORRY...

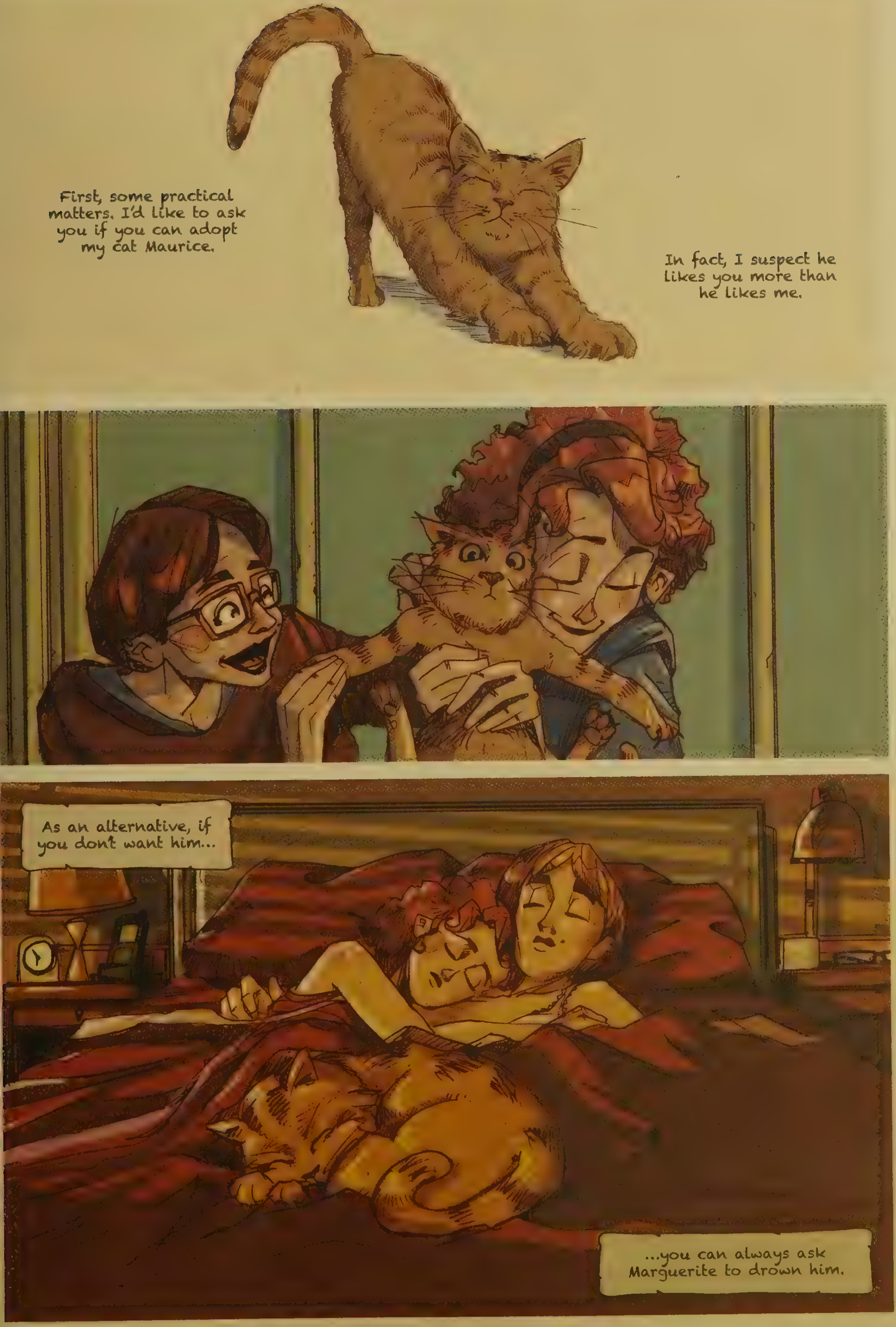

MARGUERITE... CAN YOU GET ME A PENCIL AND SOME PAPER?
Dear Sophie...
...I'm using my last strength and what little sanity I have left to write you this letter.


Tonight I was visited by a gang of gnomes.
They were singing Mozart's Requiem acappella, completely naked.
I wasn't. I'm just messing with you.
I was just making you question my sanity.


Well, then...
AND TODAY SEVERAL HUNDRED PEOPLE CAME TO CRESSY FOR THE FUNERAL OF THE PIANIST JULIEN DUBOIS, WHO HAD NUMEROUS HITS UNDER THE NAME OF ERIC BONJOUR...
7


...throughout this letter, I will try to avoid being corny, but I assure you it will be relatively inevitable.
JULIEN DUBOIS
1923-1997
"Vivre chaque jour comme si vous aviez un cancer"

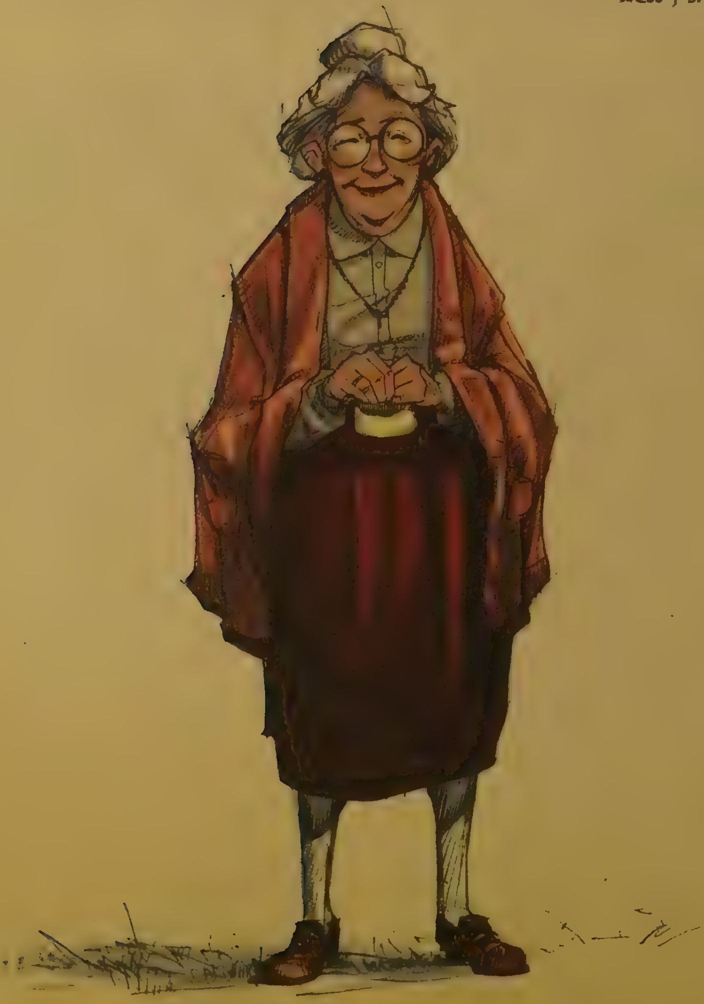

I STILL THINK IT'S VERY SILLY.
WITH SO MANY NICE THINGS HE USED TO SAY...
After all, it was too many years of ruffle shirts and glitter. It's in my blood.

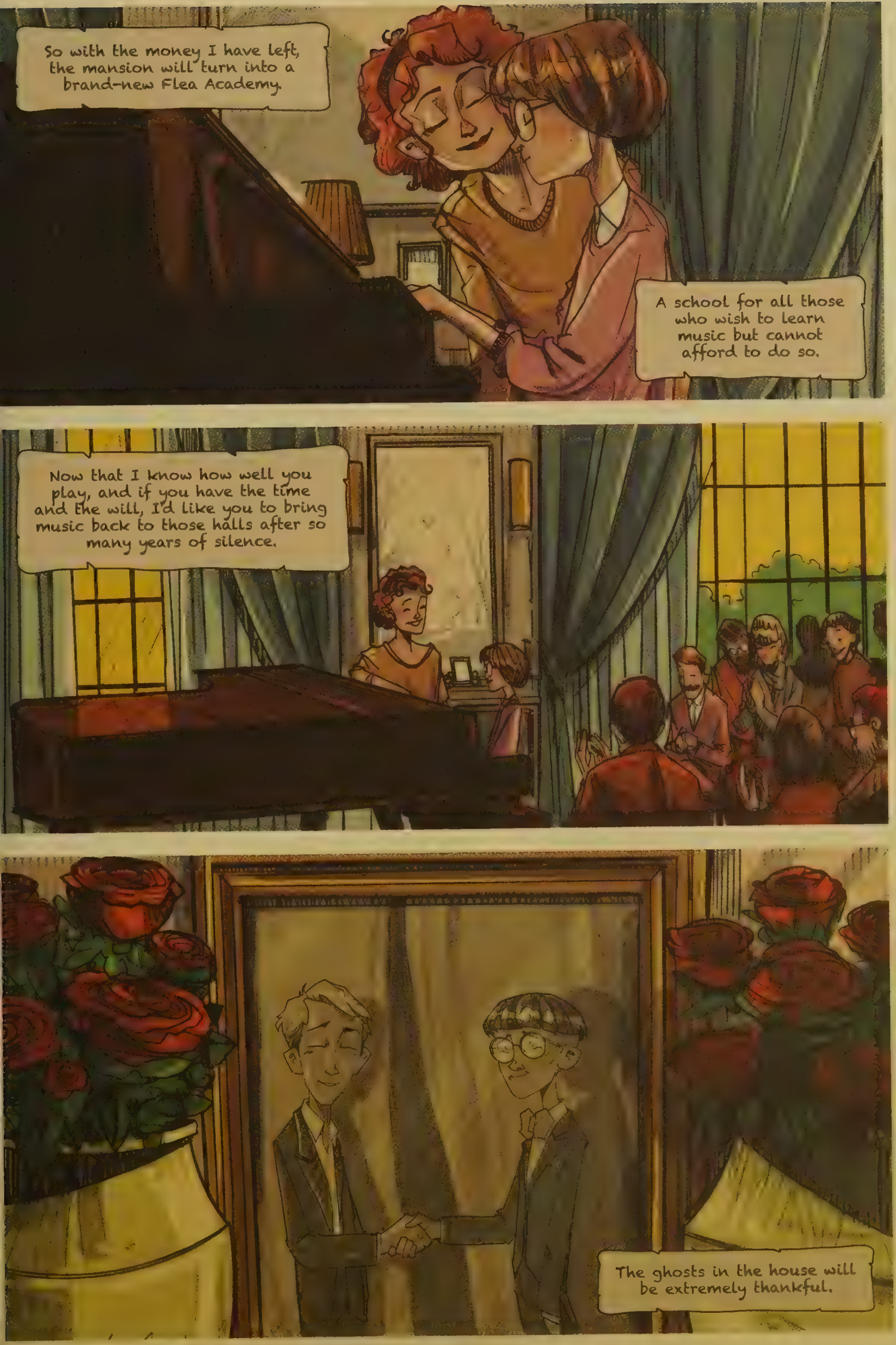

First, some practical matters. I'd like to ask you if you can adopt my cat Maurice.
In fact, I suspect he likes you more than he likes me.
As an alternative, if you don't want him...
...you can always ask Marguerite to drown him.

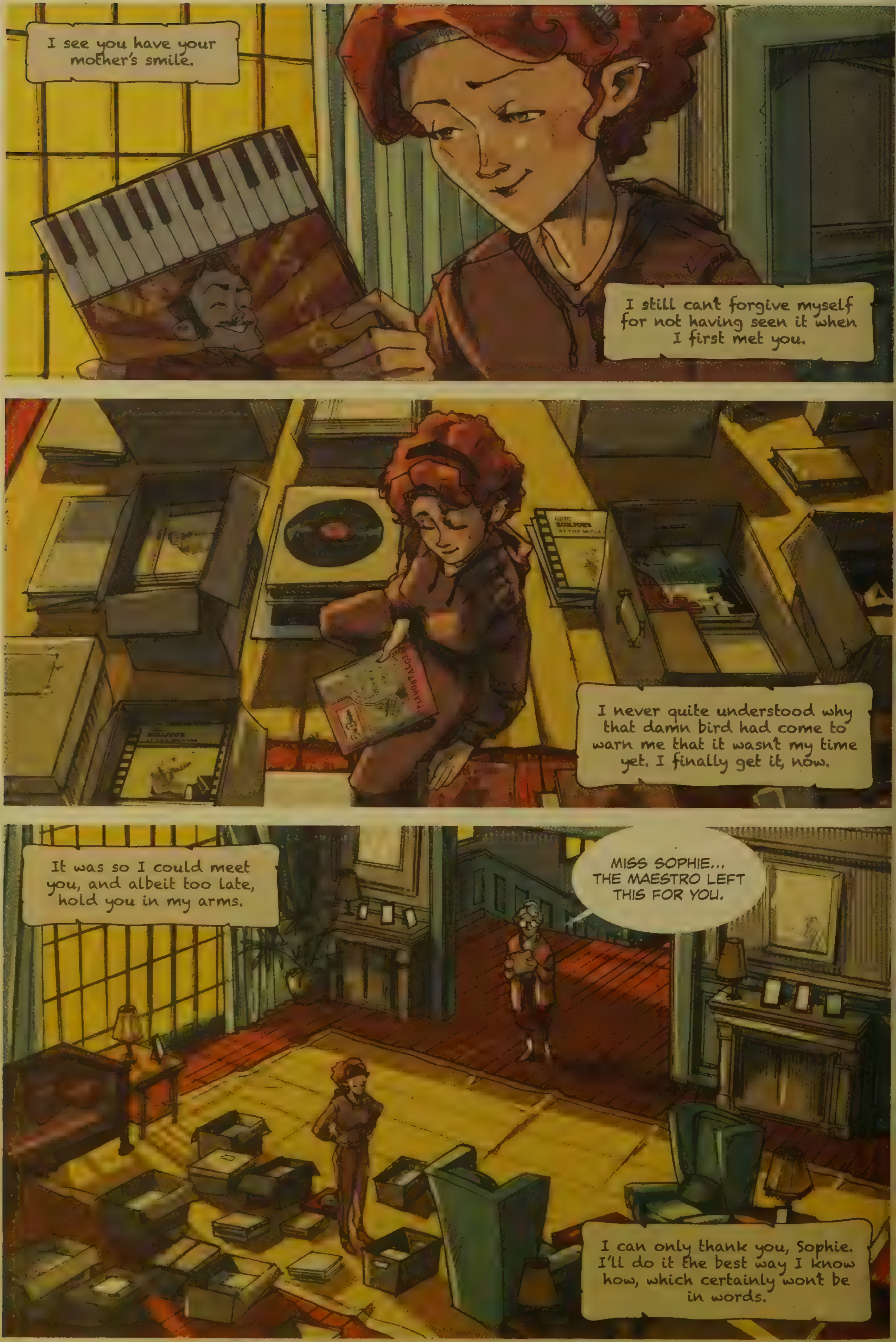
Speaking of
Marguerite...

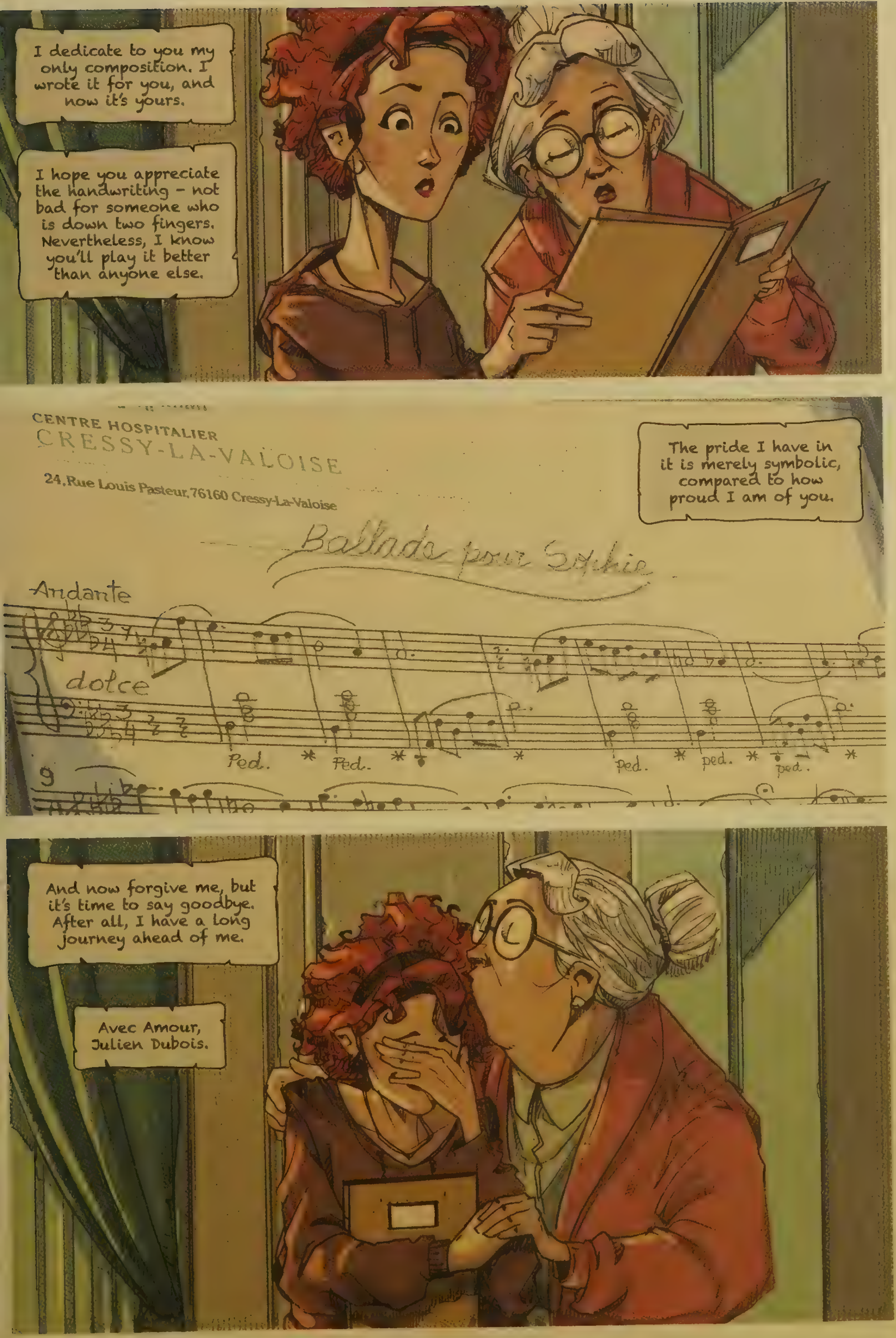
I tried several times
to convince her to take
my house, but she says
she doesn't want it.

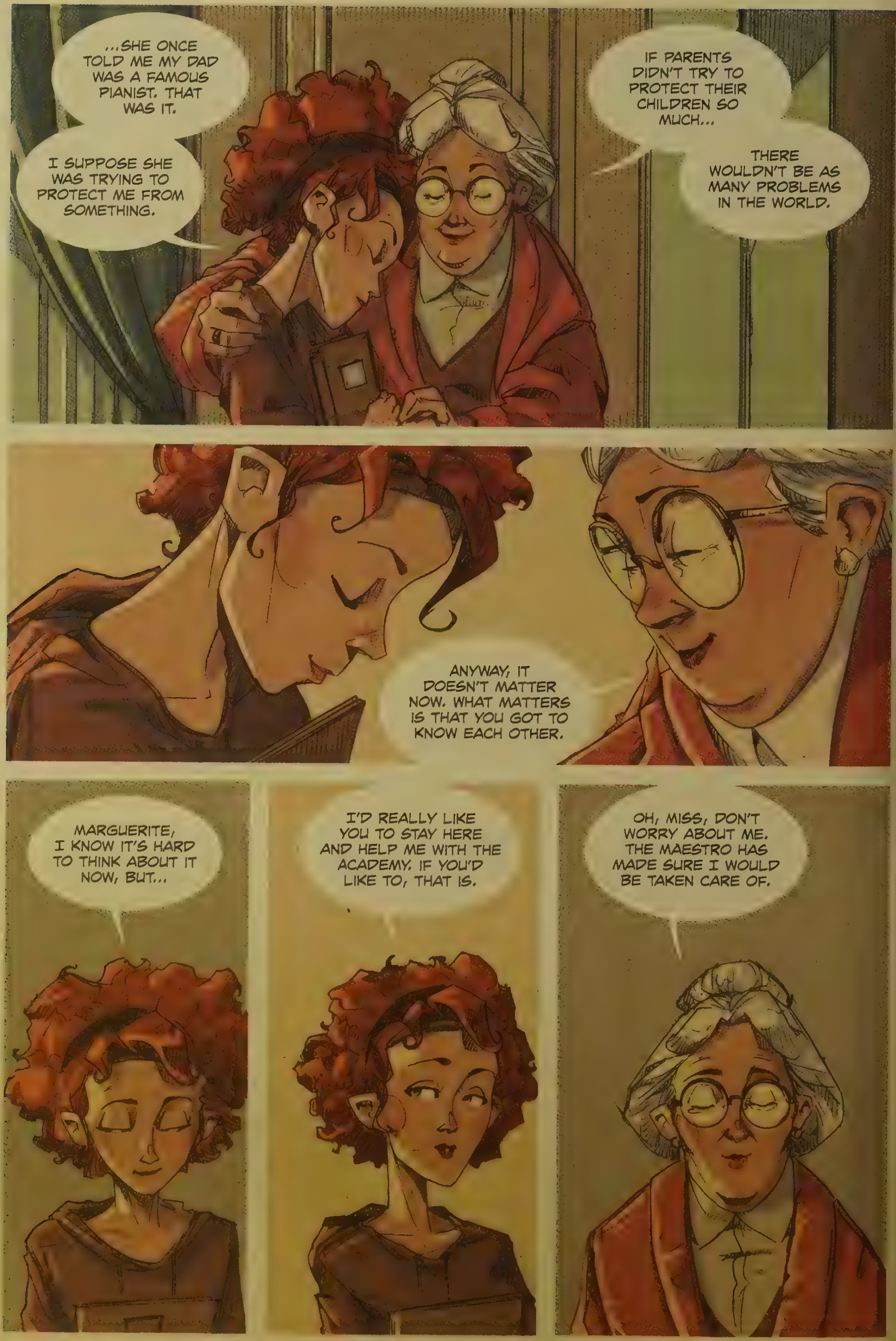
"I bet you'd come
here to haunt me as
well", she says.

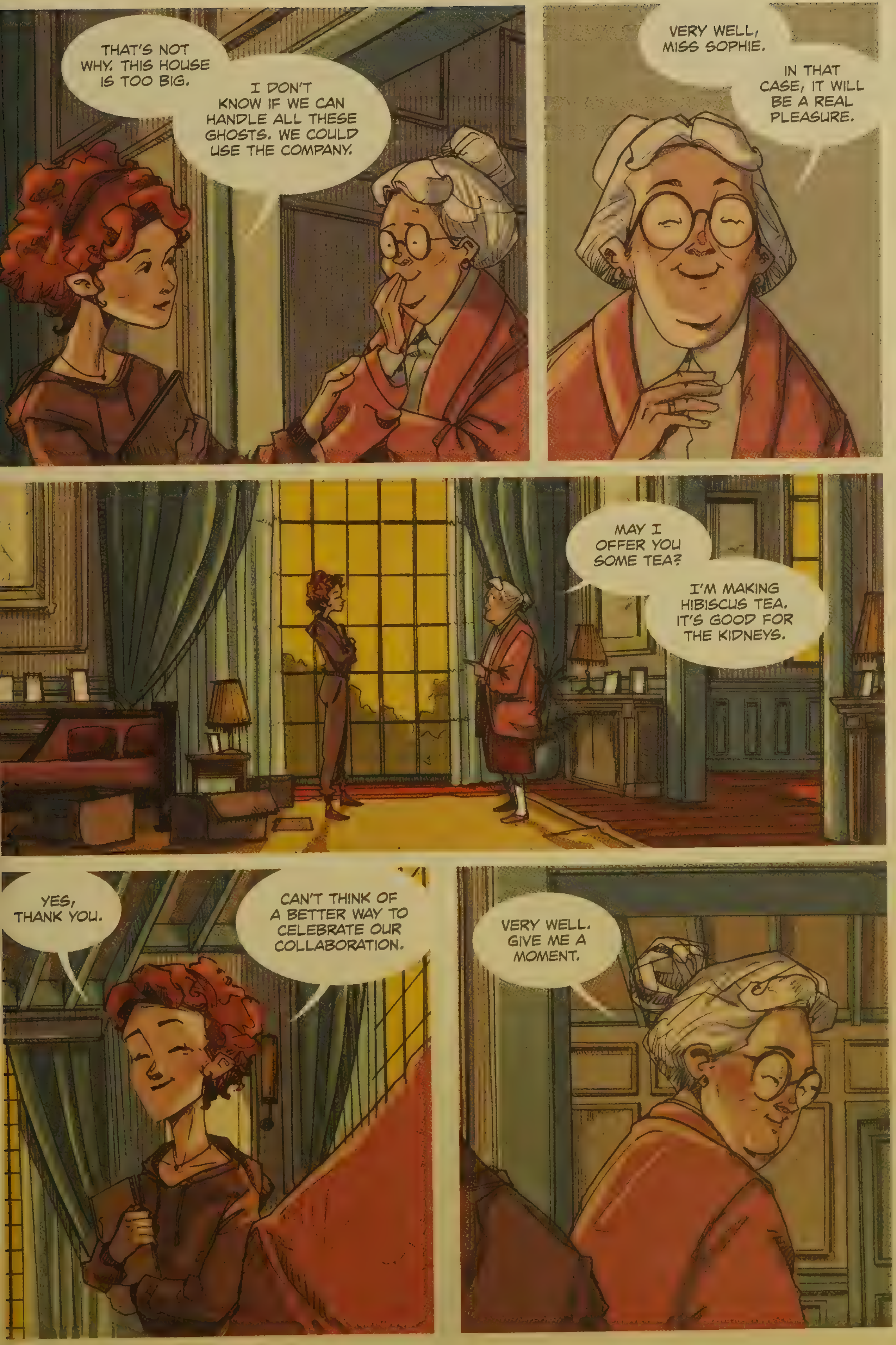


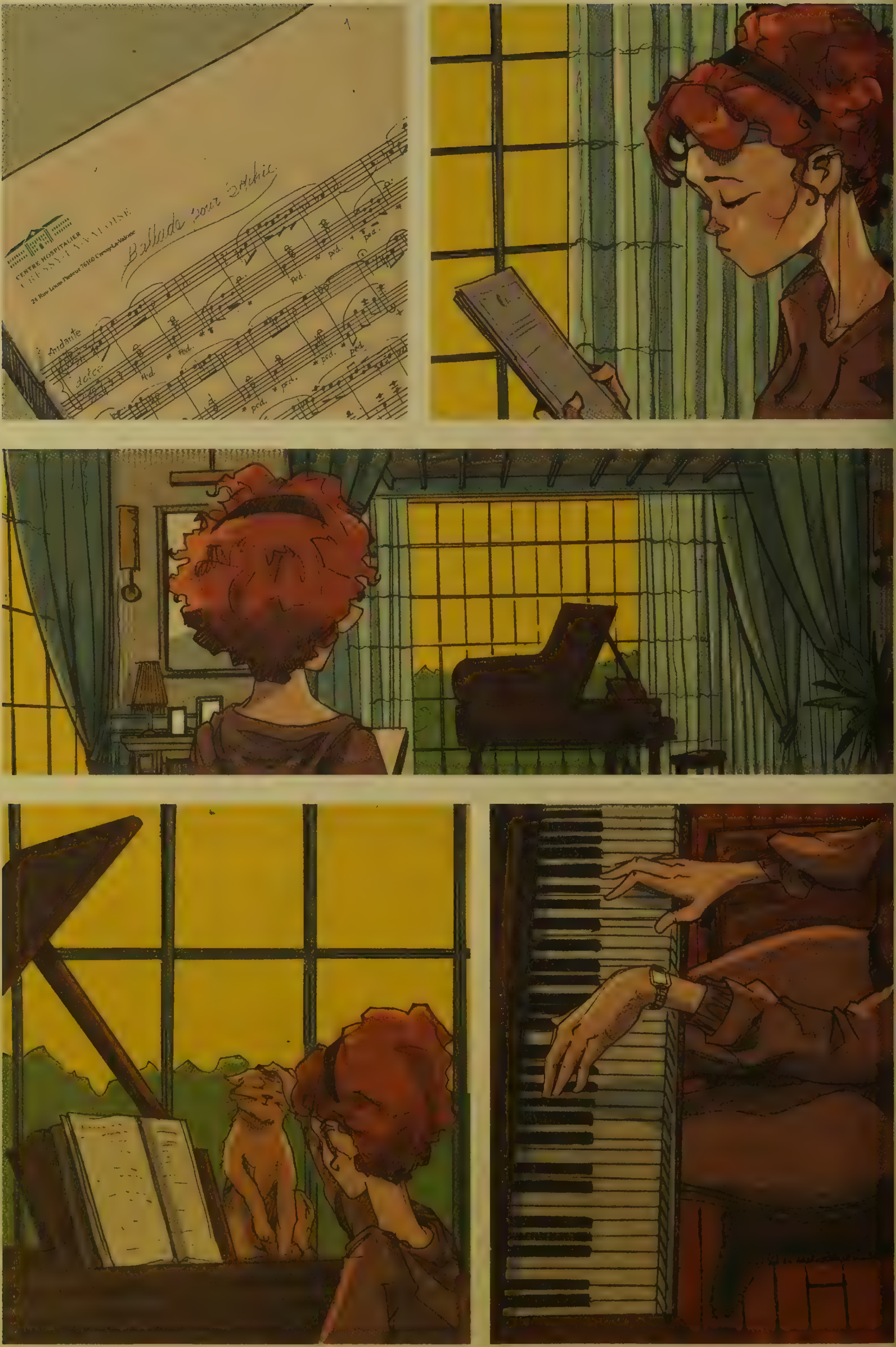

So with the money I have left, the mansion will turn into a brand-new Flea Academy.
A school for all those who wish to learn music but cannot afford to do so.
Now that I know how well you play, and if you have the time and the will, I'd like you to bring music back to those halls after so many years of silence.
The ghosts in the house will be extremely thankful.

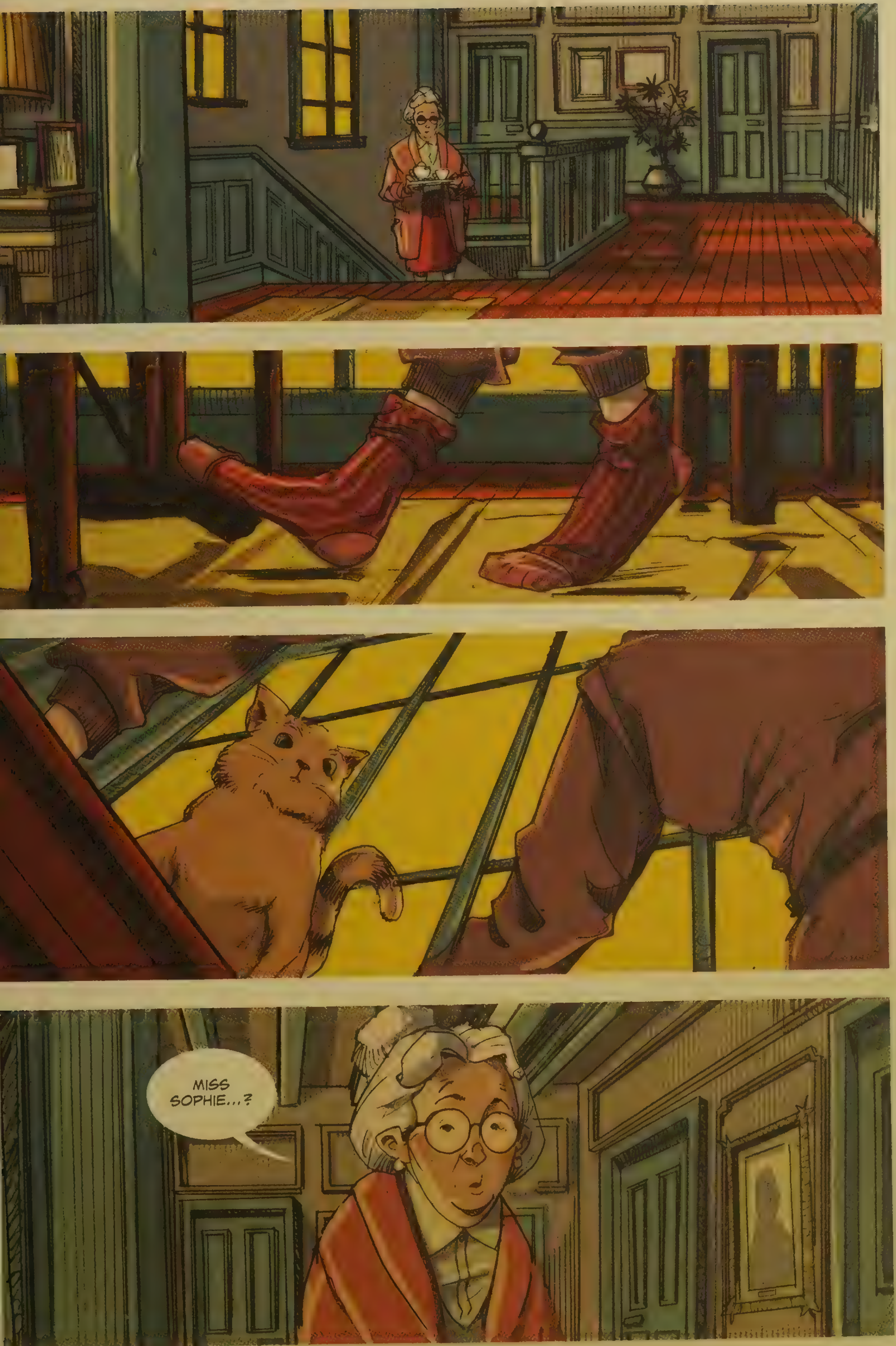

I see you have your mother's smile.
I still can't forgive myself for not having seen it when I first met you.
I never quite understood why that damn bird had come to warn me that it wasn't my time yet. I finally get it, now.
It was so I could meet you, and albeit too late, hold you in my arms.
MISS SOPHIE... THE MAESTRO LEFT THIS FOR YOU.
I can only thank you, Sophie. I'll do it the best way I know how, which certainly won't be in words.

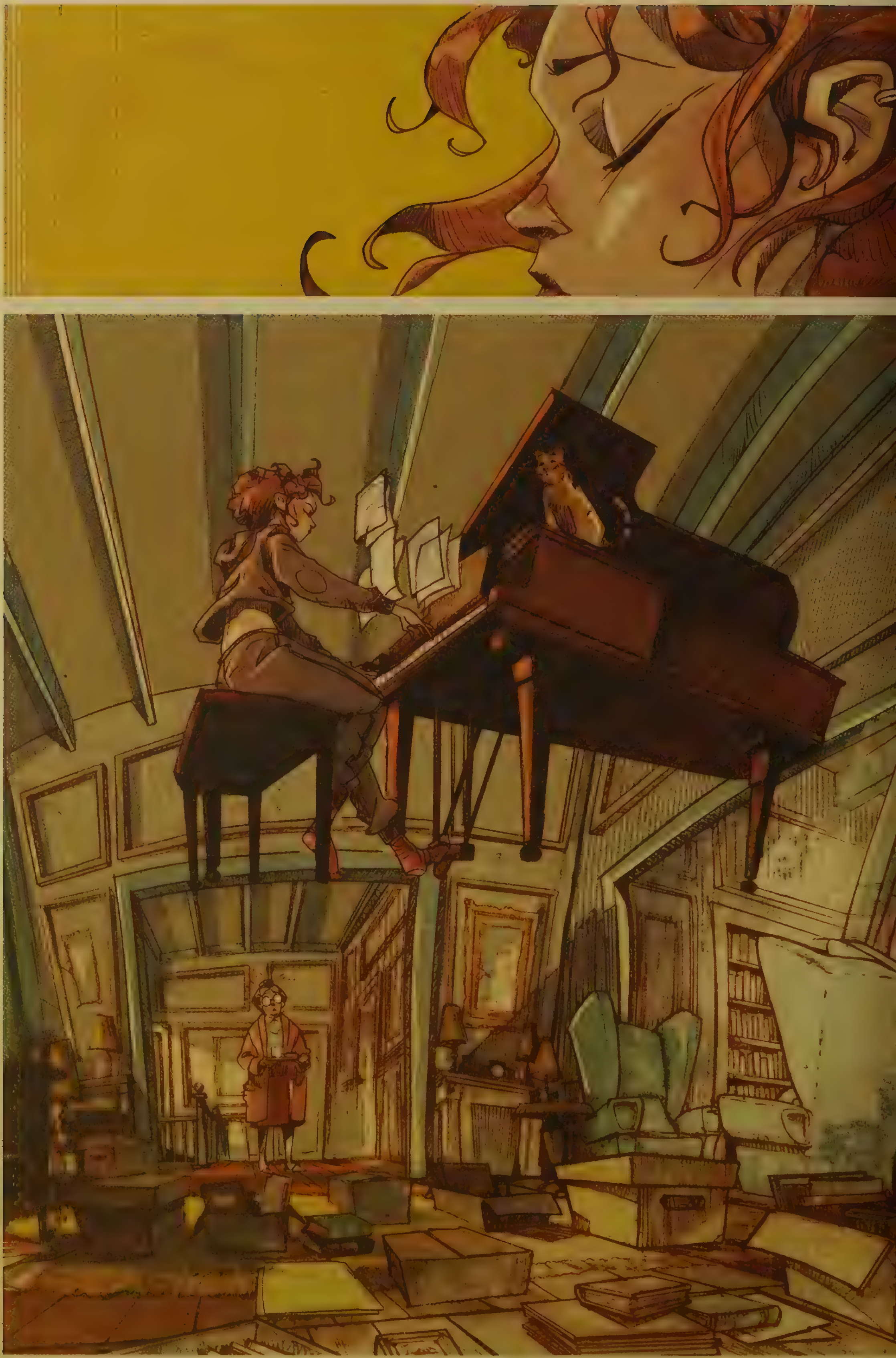

I dedicate to you my only composition. I wrote it for you, and now it's yours.
I hope you appreciate the handwriting – not bad for someone who is down two fingers. Nevertheless, I know you'll play it better than anyone else.
CENTRE HOSPITALIER
CRESSY-LA-VALOISE
24, Rue Louis Pasteur, 76160 Cressy-La-Valoise
Ballade pour Sophie
Andante
dolce
Ped. * Ped. * * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. *
9
The pride I have in it is merely symbolic, compared to how proud I am of you.
And now forgive me, but it's time to say goodbye. After all, I have a long journey ahead of me.
Avec Amour,
Julien Dubois.


...SHE ONCE TOLD ME MY DAD WAS A FAMOUS PIANIST. THAT WAS IT.
I SUPPOSE SHE WAS TRYING TO PROTECT ME FROM SOMETHING.
IF PARENTS DIDN'T TRY TO PROTECT THEIR CHILDREN SO MUCH...
THERE WOULDN'T BE AS MANY PROBLEMS IN THE WORLD.
ANYWAY, IT DOESN'T MATTER NOW. WHAT MATTERS IS THAT YOU GOT TO KNOW EACH OTHER.
MARGUERITE, I KNOW IT'S HARD TO THINK ABOUT IT NOW, BUT...
I'D REALLY LIKE YOU TO STAY HERE AND HELP ME WITH THE ACADEMY. IF YOU'D LIKE TO, THAT IS.
OH, MISS, DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME. THE MAESTRO HAS MADE SURE I WOULD BE TAKEN CARE OF.


THAT'S NOT WHY. THIS HOUSE IS TOO BIG.
I DON'T KNOW IF WE CAN HANDLE ALL THESE GHOSTS. WE COULD USE THE COMPANY.
VERY WELL, MISS SOPHIE.
IN THAT CASE, IT WILL BE A REAL PLEASURE.
MAY I OFFER YOU SOME TEA?
I'M MAKING HIBISCUS TEA. IT'S GOOD FOR THE KIDNEYS.
YES, THANK YOU.
CAN'T THINK OF A BETTER WAY TO CELEBRATE OUR COLLABORATION.
VERY WELL. GIVE ME A MOMENT.

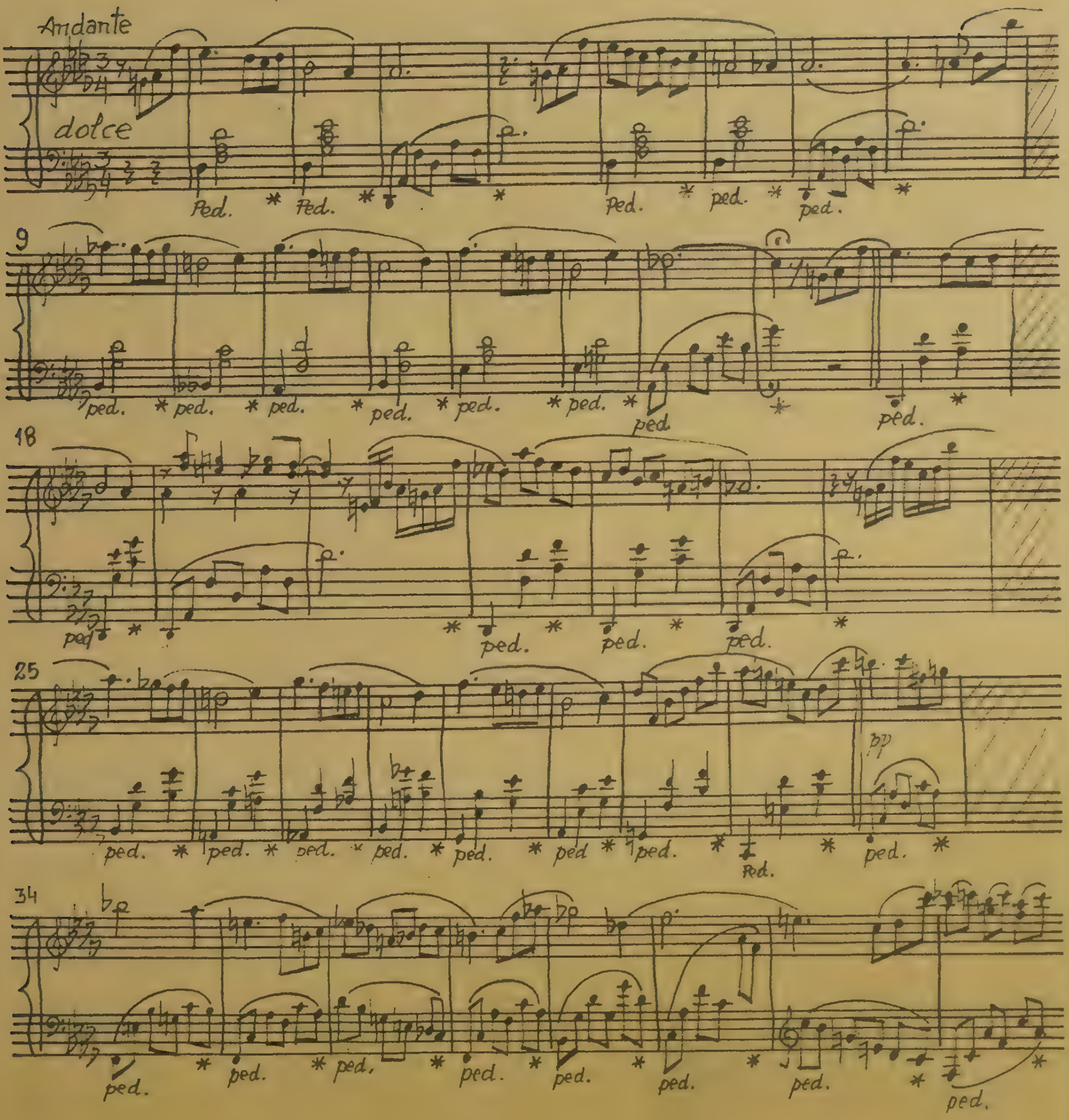

CENTRE HOSPITALIER
CRESSY-LA-VALOISE
21 Rue Louis Pasteur 76110 Cressy-La-Valoise
Ballade pour Sophie
Andante
dolce
Ped.
ped.

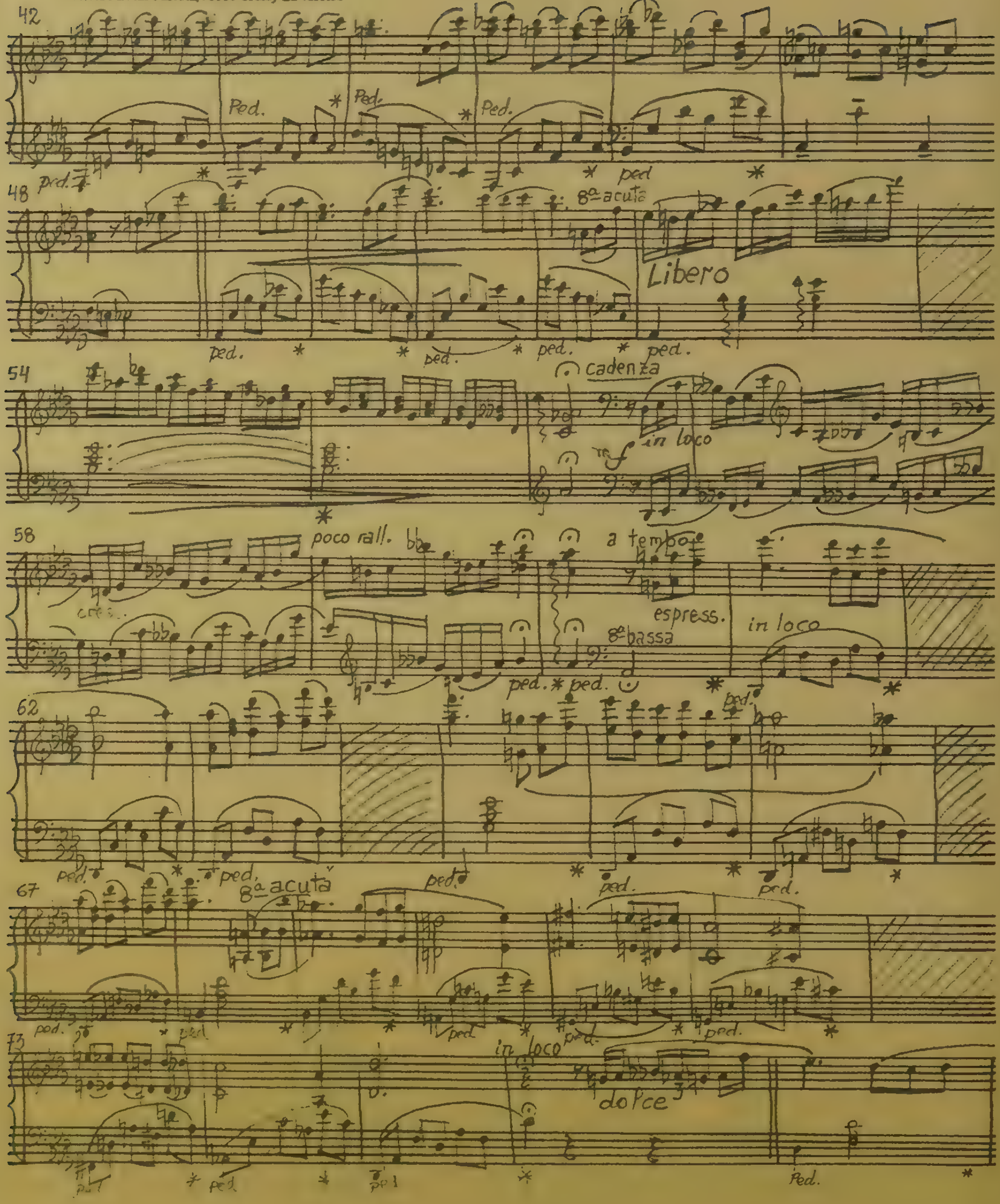

MISS SOPHIE...?

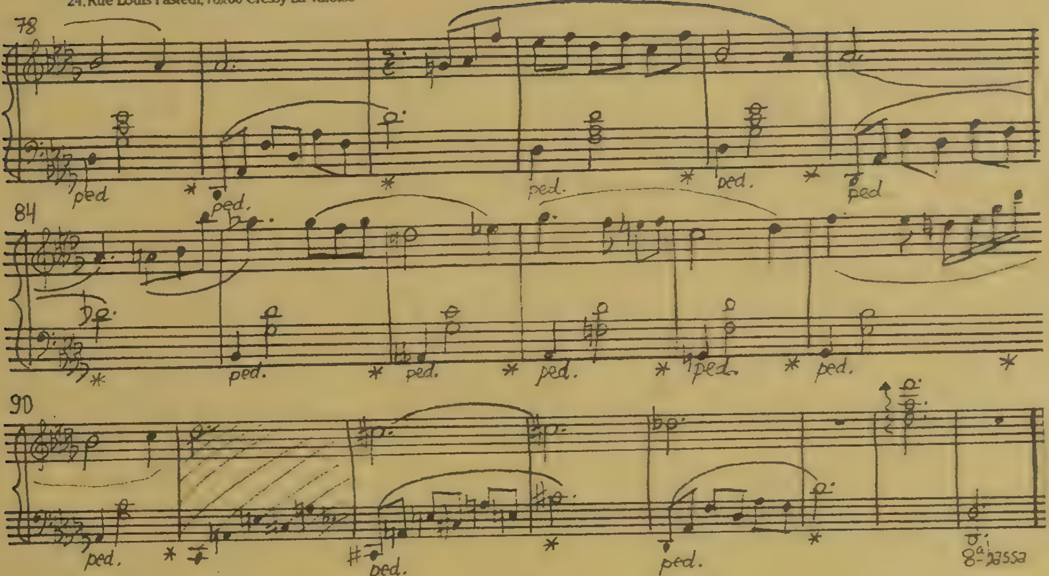


For Beatriz Lebre.

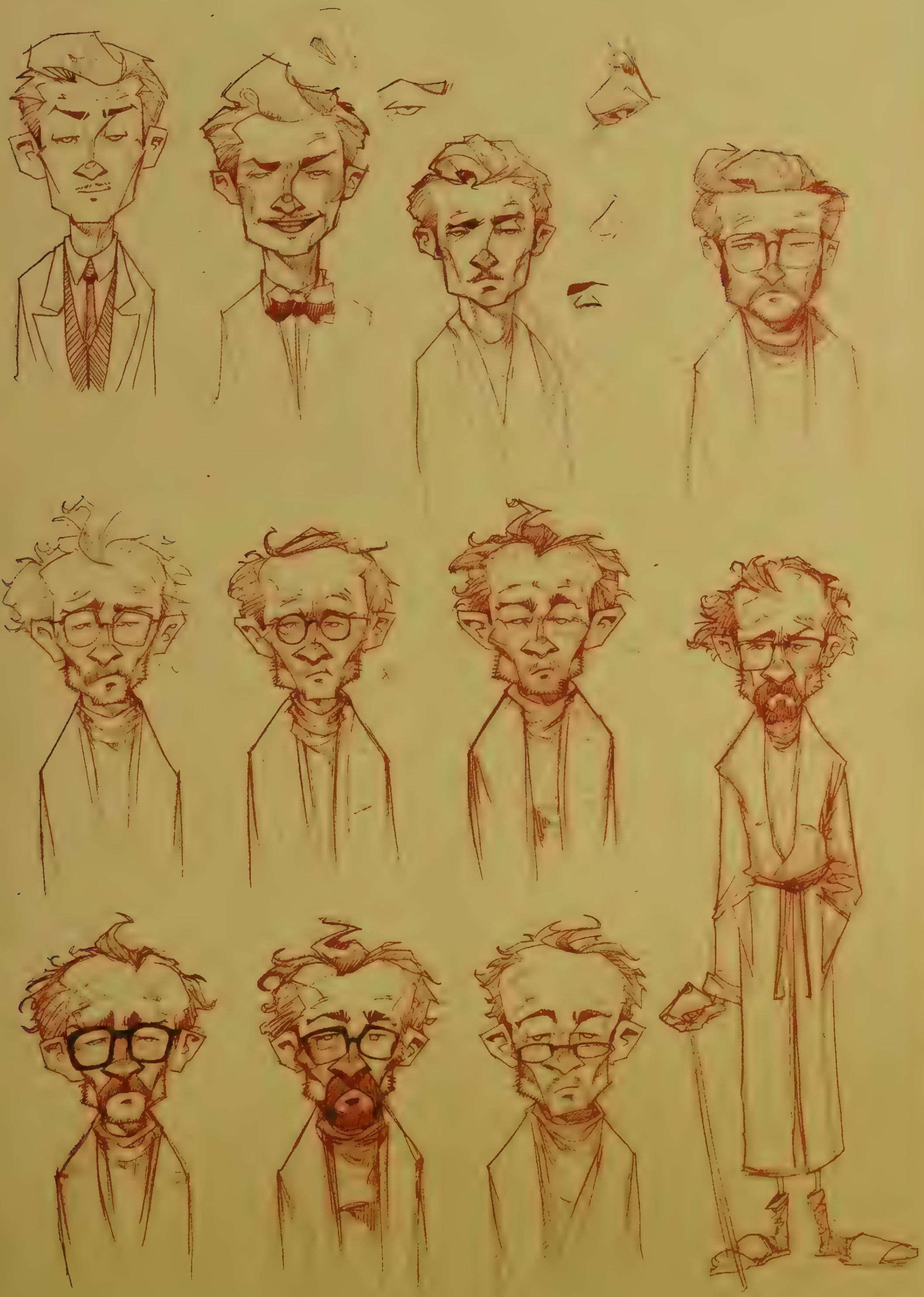
Ballade pour Sophie

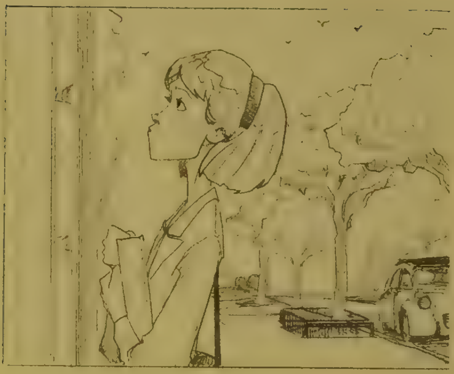

Andante
dolce
Ped.
ped.
9
18
25
pp
34

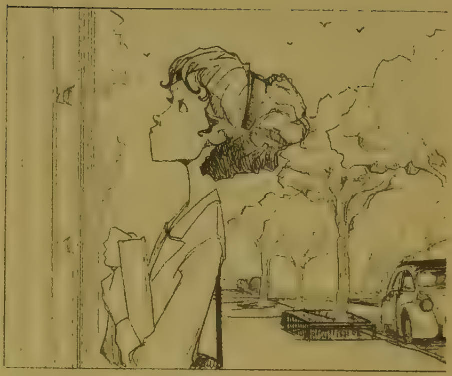

42
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
ped.
ped
48
8a acuta
Libero
ped.
ped.
ped.
ped.
54
cadenza
mf
in loco
58
poco rall.
a tempo
cres.
espress.
8a bassa
in loco
ped.
ped.
ped.
62
ped.
ped.
ped.
ped.
ped.
67
8a acuta
ped.
ped.
ped.
ped.
73
in loco
ped.
dolce
ped
ped
Ped.

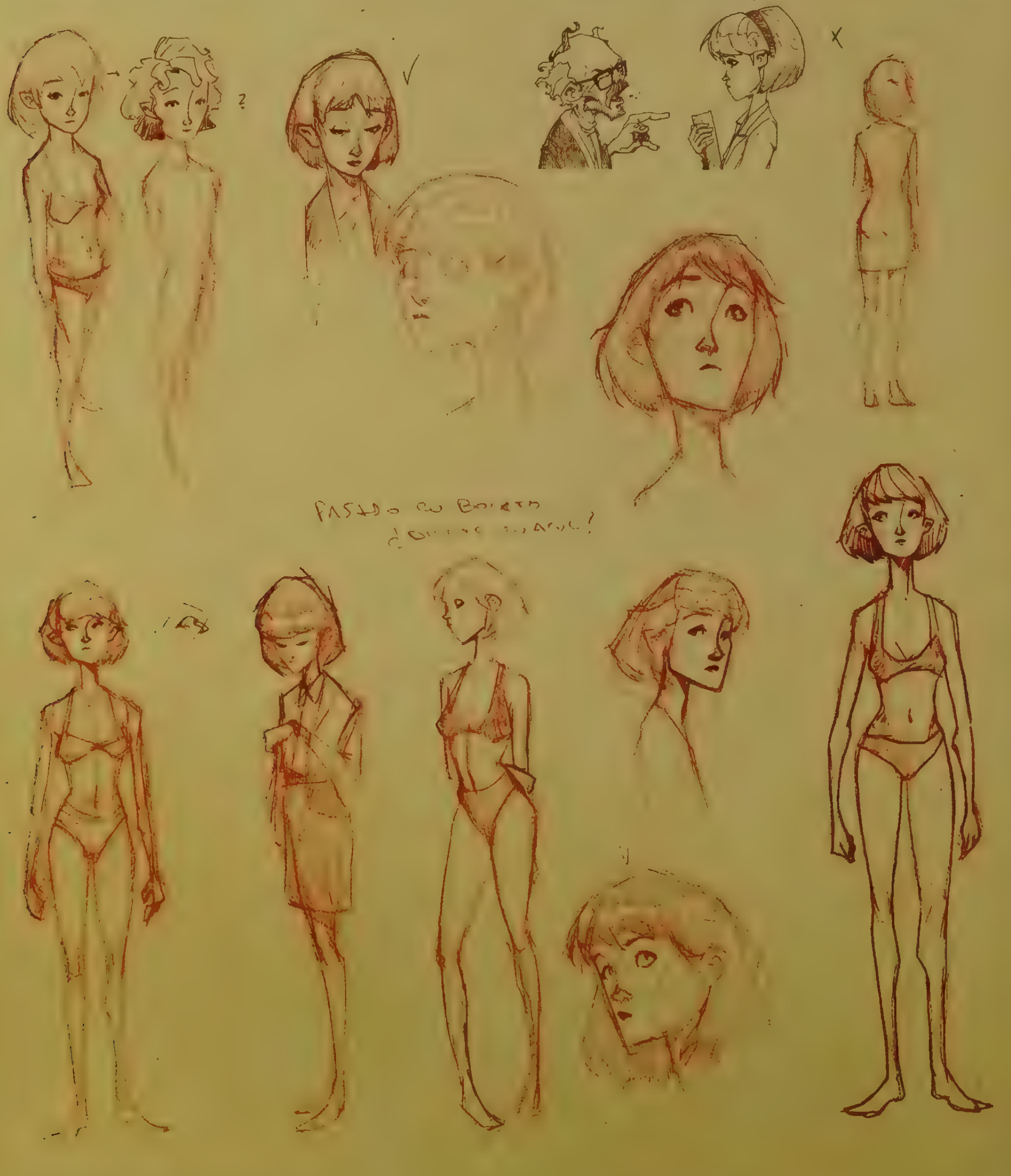

78
ped
ped.
ped.
ped.
ped
84
ped.
ped.
ped.
ped.
ped.
90
ped.
ped.
ped.
8ª bassa

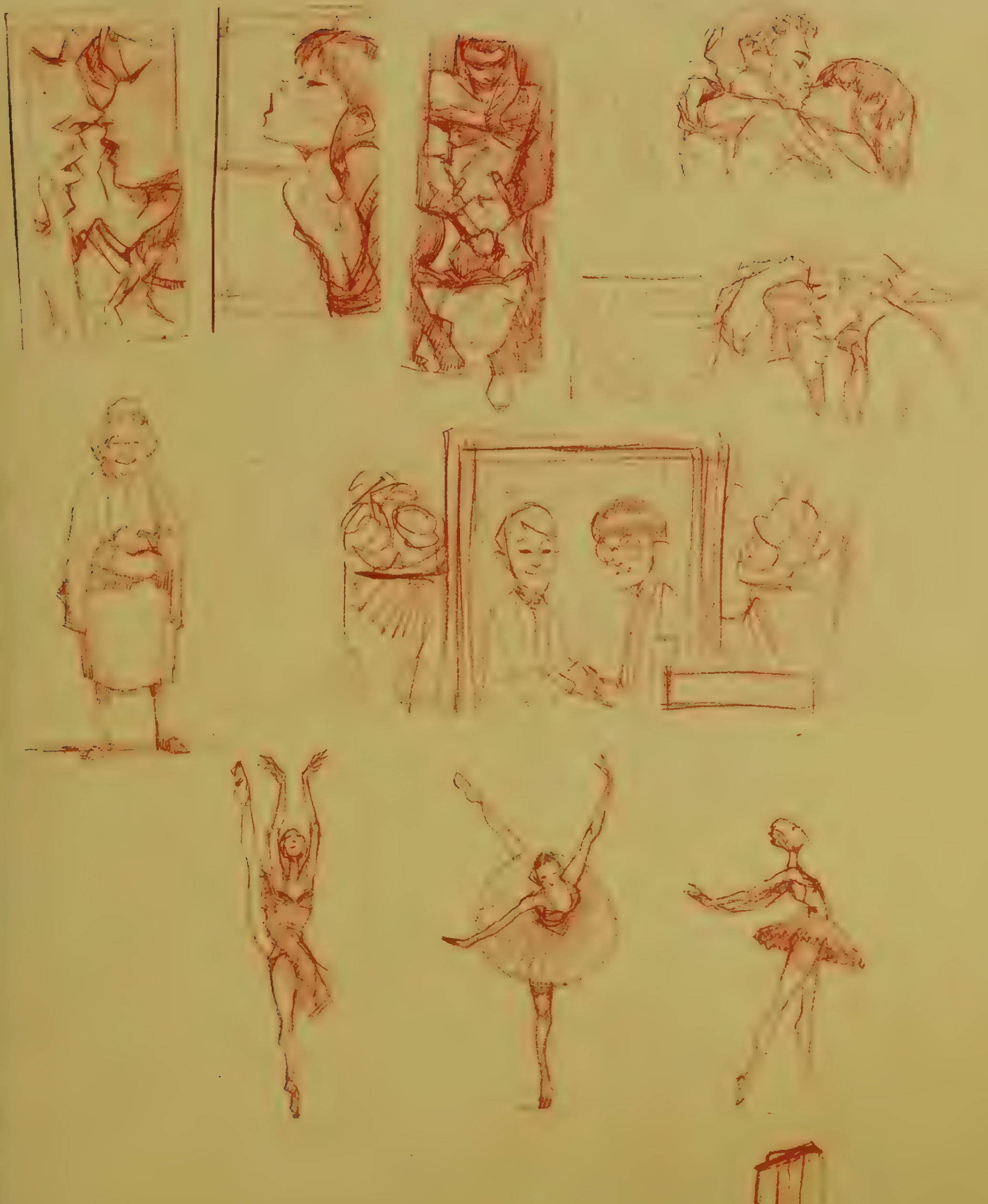
1937-CLV








?
X
PASADO EN BONITA
¿DONDE [illegible] AQUÍ!



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Filipe Melo

is a musician, film director, and author. He developed a passion for piano and improvisation from an early age. He studied at Hot Clube de Portugal and later at Berklee College of Music. After many years as a pianist, he also became a composer and an orchestrator. He currently teaches at Escola Superior de Música, in Lisbon.

In cinema, he developed several cult projects: *I'll See You in My Dreams*, *Um Mundo Catita,* and *Sleepwalk*, as well as commercials and music videos.

His books are published in several countries. In the US, he wrote for the Eisner-winning anthology *Dark Horse Presents*, alongside names such as Frank Miller and Mike Mignola. In 2019, he received a career award from the Amadora International Comics Festival.

He frequently works with Juan Cavia, with whom he has published several graphic novels.

Juan Cavia

has worked as an art director and illustrator since 2004. He studied cinema and simultaneously developed skills in illustration and painting from an early age with his mentor, the Argentinean artist Carlos Pedrazzini. At the age of 21, he began a career as an art director. Since then, he has worked on advertisements, TV, music videos, theater, and nine feature films, including *The Secret in Their Eyes* by J. Campanella (Oscar-winner for Best Foreign Film).

He frequently works with Filipe Melo, with whom he has published several graphic novels.

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Filipe Melo is a musician, film director, and author. He studied at the Berklee College of Music in Boston, and since then he has worked as a jazz pianist, producer, and orchestrator. He has composed music for film, directed music videos, and made award-winning short films. His international writing work includes the *Dark Horse Presents* anthology and a career award from the Amadora International Comics Festival.

Juan Cavia has worked as an art director and illustrator since 2004, after studying illustration and painting with the Argentinean artist Carlos Pedrazzini. His work includes graphic novels, advertisements, TV, music videos, theater, and nine feature films, including Juan José Campanella's Oscar-winning *The Secret in Their Eyes*.

When a young journalist prompts a reclusive musical superstar to finally break his silence, he pours out an astonishing saga of rivalry and regret, starring child prodigies and bitter old men, beautiful dancers and demonic managers, Nazi commandants, compassionate nuns, and lifesaving animals.

Ballad for Sophie is a sweeping tale that spans the twentieth century, packed with all the drama of a rock & roll biopic and more twists than a night at the opera. Filipe Melo and Juan Cavia have composed a stunning graphic symphony exploring a lifetime of ambition, betrayal, compassion, anguish, long-buried secrets, and flying pianos.

"Filipe Melo and Juan Cavia form what is probably the most talented and productive duo in the recent Portuguese graphic novel scene."
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